10 Zines Talking Back to Trump! Plus the Winners of the Zine Awards 2018 and DIY for the Apocalypse!

brokenpencil

The Magazine of Zine Culture and the Independent Arts

ROLL THE DICE: HOW TO GET AN ARTS GRANT

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Broken Pencil ISSUE 82

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Artwork *Broken Pencil* encourages artists and illustrators to reach out for publication or collaboration. Please send proposals to editor@brokenpencil.com. If you would like to become a regular illustrator for *Broken Pencil*, please send a letter and samples of your work to editor@brokenpencil.com.

Fiction *Broken Pencil* accepts submissions of short fiction (50-2,000 words) between February 1st and September 15th, and for Indie Writers' Deathmatch between September 16th and December 31st. For more information, visit brokenpencil.com/submissions.

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Our Supporters *Broken Pencil* acknowledges the support of the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts. *Broken Pencil* acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities. *Broken Pencil* is completely made and manufactured in Canada.

Contact us See the masthead for editorial and office contacts. Our office phone number is 416 204-1700.

Broken Pencil, PO Box 203, Station P,
Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S7 Canada

brokenpencil.com.

Winter 2018 issue 82 | ISSN 1201-8996

Canada Council for the Arts | Conseil des arts du Canada

Funded by the Government of Canada | Canada

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO
50 YEARS OF ONTARIO GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF THE ARTS
50 ANS DE SOUTIEN DU GOUVERNEMENT DE L'ONTARIO AUX ARTS

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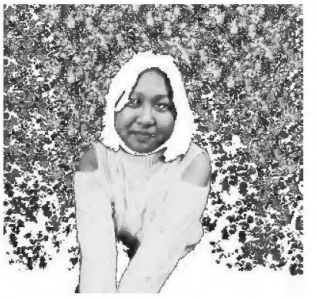
Liz Mason has been self-publishing for 20 years. Recent published works include *Caboose #10* and *Awesome Things #2*. Her work has also been printed in such publications as *Punk Planet* and *The Zine Yearbook*. She appeared on the reality show *Starting Over* to provide instruction on publishing zines, which NBC executives referred to as "pamphlets," as if they were Marxist propaganda. Her 1987 membership number from SHADES The Official Corey Hart Fan Club was #13881.



Natalie Mark is an illustrator and storyteller from Winnipeg, Manitoba. They create narrative work that revolves around the chronology of memory and trauma, from experiencing private pain and wanting to heal. Their work is about loving and letting go, through the stories they carry in their heart. Find them on Instagram: **@roasted.oolong.**

Sofi Gutierrez is an illustrator originally from El Salvador, now living in the Greater Toronto Area. Her saturated palettes and whimsical worlds seek to create an invigorating and inviting worldview through colourfully balanced, visually provocative pieces. Find more of her work at **sofigu.com.**

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COMIC LIBRARIANS BEGIN BUILDING OPEN LIBRARY

Imagine a full-time space for comic lovers and artists to read, create, and connect. Well, a group of Toronto librarians are trying to make that a reality.

"There is currently no yearlong community space in North America dedicated solely to comics accessibility," explains Canadian Comics Open Library co-founder Rotem Diamant. As a librarian, she wants to re-think how comics are shelved.

"The way comics are being catalogued and organized needs to be improved," she explains. "We use a different approach."

For now, the grassroots library is still fundraising and looking for a permanent space. In November, they had their first pop-up event in Toronto, with many more soon to come!

Check out canadacomicsol.org to find out how to support. (Jonathan Valelly)

Photo by Ramtin Teymouri

Froid d'art

Imagine taking a winter after-dinner stroll and encountering a glowing profile of a red-headed young woman, or perhaps spring flowers — suspended in a bright brick of ice.

That's precisely what Kingston, ON, artist David Dossett wants for you. For the second year, he will mount public art installations in the city, suspending them in good old H2o. "My wife said [any installation] would get vandalized, so freeze it," explains the artist, who also runs the gallery Martello Alley, which is built in the style of a French fishing village.

Now, "I became known as the guy who sells ice to Canadians in winter," he laughs.

Find Dossett's installations around Kingston from mid-January until they melt. Visit martelloalley.com for a map. (Clayton Tomlinson)

But You're Not Black

Danielle's not the right colour to be Caribbean, but she's not very good at being Chinese.

Anisa Rawhani

We tend to connect someone's cultural identity with their visible race. Certain skin colours are associated with certain places and traditions, leaving little room for identities to exist comfortably at intersections. That's a fact that Toronto-born Danielle Ayow — a descendant of Chinese-Caribbean parents — is all too familiar with. Ayow is visibly Chinese, as is her family, but they grew up in Trinidad. In her upcoming short doc, *But You're Not Black*, Ayow challenges ideas of culture and colour being homogenous, and talks with experts about the root of her cultural dilemma.

The film will premiere at the Breakthroughs Film Festival in June 2019.

Poetry of the panel

Poetry is not always everyone's bag. But what if you had a comic adaptation to help you plug in to the imagery of Yeats or Tennyson? Montreal artist Julian Peters has been adapting poetry into comics for over a decade. "I see so many analogies between poetry and comics," explains Peters. "The importance of rhythm, the guiding of the reader's eye across the page, the expressive use of juxtaposition, and the reiteration of visual elements in comics as a kind of visual rhyming.'" After years of sharing his project at julianpeterscomics.com, Plough Publishing House will now be anthologizing a number of his comic poems in a book to be released in 2020 — keep your eyes out! (Jonathan Valelly)

ANNABEL LEE
BY EDGAR ALLAN POE
DRAWINGS BY JULIAN PETERS
IT WAS MANY AND MANY A YEAR AGO,
IN A KINGDOM BY THE SEA,
THAT A MAIDEN THERE LIVED WHOM YOU MAY KNOW
AND THIS MAIDEN SHE LIVED WITH NO OTHER THOUGHT THAN TO LOVE AND BE LOVED BY ME.
BY THE NAME OF ANNABEL LEE;
DÉRAISON
OR, J'AI LA VISION D'OMBRES SANGUINOLENTES
ET DE CHEVAUX FOUGUEUX MAFFANTS,
ET C'EST COMME DES CRIS DE GUEUX, HOQUETS D'ENFANTS,
RÂLES
D'EXPIRATIONS LENTES.

Art Holes

Creators diagram where they work

by Dalbert B. Vilarino

This studio space doubles as my bedroom. I love being able to wear whatever I want and not be judged for it.

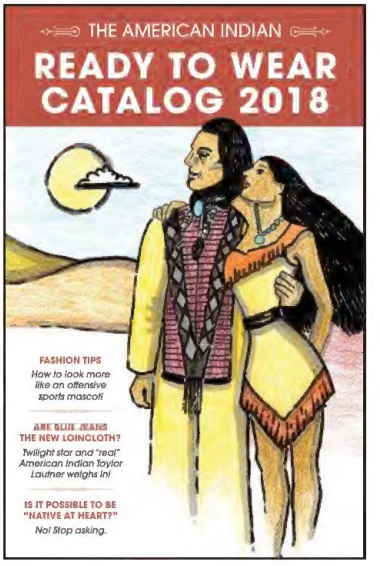
Usually, the whole situation devolves into chaos no matter how organized I try to maintain things. I keep a bunch of influences in the form of postcards, prints, books, zines, and sculptures all around me, and I don't think I could function as an illustrator without them. I often find myself confused about how to proceed with a piece, and I've realized that there is rarely one surefire source of inspiration I can return to repeatedly to find the answer I'm looking for.

Dalbert B. Vilarino *is an illustrator and designer based in Toronto. He spends most of his time in some mixed state of confusion and over-caffeination, frantically drawing in the hopes that it will eventually lead to more drawing in the future.*

dalbertbv.com

Smell of Our Own

The Smell of Our Own is a column where artists interview, or are interviewed by, family members. In this edition, Joey Clift interviews his mother, Janet Meyer. The two collaborated to create The American Indian Ready to Wear Catalog, *which was a finalist in the Political Zine Category of this year's Zine Awards. Joey wrote, and Janet illustrated.*


THE AMERICAN INDIAN
READY TO WEAR
CATALOG 2018
FASHION TIPS
How to look more like an offensive sports mascot!
ARE BLUE JEANS THE NEW LOINCLOTH?
Twilight star and "real" American Indian Taylor Lautner weighs in!
IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE "NATIVE AT HEART?"
No! Stop asking.

Joey Clift: How would you describe your art style?

Janet Meyer: Abstract expressionist, I think?

JC: For laymen, what does that mean?

JM: I take realistic things and make them unrealistic. Like musical instruments and stuff.

JC: What was the first point where you felt comfortable telling people "I'm an artist, and that's what I do."

JM: When I was in high school, because art is what I did for money. If I wanted to sell my stuff, I had to tell people about it and then show them!

JC: It took me a few years before I felt comfortable telling people that I'm an artist. I mean... a writer.

JM: That's an artist!

JC: Haha, thanks. You get what I'm talking about!

JM: Usually when you tell people you're an artist, they say, "Yeah, right. What do you really do?" They don't take you seriously, so you have to take yourself seriously.

JC: What was the first moment that you decided that you wanted to be an artist?

JM: You know, I was about four years old and for Christmas I got a big box of art supplies. When I took the lid off the box, my mind just went swirling, because I could just imagine all of the possibilities. That was my most favourite Christmas gift I've ever gotten and that lit the spark and steered me in the right direction.

JC: I feel like when I was growing up I didn't appreciate how prolific of an artist you are. Our living room walls were just covered with all of this amazing artwork that would constantly cycle out and I only noticed when friends would comment on how "your mom is such an amazing artist, why don't you talk about her more?"

JM: Well, honey, you had your own life going on. We've all got to find our own way.

JC: So I guess my question is, how are you so prolific?

JM: I spend a lot of time in the studio. It's like learning to play a musical instrument. You've gotta practice. Do some artwork every day. A sketch. A painting. Something!

JC: What's your favourite thing that you've ever painted?

JM: I did one of you. A little watercolor.

JC: Aw!

JM: I kept it, and I never sold it. It's a little abstract watercolor. I still have it somewhere.

JC: Wait, is this that *Dream Joey* one?

JM: Yeah! *Dreaming of Joey*!

JC: Aw, I'm going to put an asterisk on the article that I did not pay you to say that.

JM: (Laughs)

JC: (Laughs)

JC: One more question. What's your favourite joke?

JM: Jokes about farts and poop and stuff.

JC: (laughs)

JM: I like potty humour.

JC: Does it disappoint you that I don't write more potty humour?

JM: Yes!

JC: (laughs)

JM: (laughs)

JC: I'm sorry!

Exposure Unit

Exposure Unit is a column by Toronto-based zinester Rabeea Syed.

HELLO *BROKEN PENCIL* readers, it's Rabeea again! In this edition of Exposure Unit, I will be talking about some of the drawbacks surrounding zine fairs and festivals, where artists like you and me present ourselves and our work to the world! I frequently exhibit at shows, and I have found that a large issue surrounding zine fairs is accessibility.

Now, accessibility is a really broad topic. It can involve a whole lot of things: space, facilities, resources, safety, and so much more. Issues of accessibility are wide-ranging, complex and intersecting, but to start, I'd like to share a story that zeroes in on the question of facilities.

I am an organizer of Zineland Terrace, a zine fair that had its first edition at the Toronto Comic Arts Festival in May 2018. There was a lot of planning and coordinating that went into the event, until we were certain that we had all of our bases covered. However, come the day of the event, we realized that something vital — washrooms — were quite far away from where we had exhibitors, and they also weren't open the entirety of the day. Even when I myself needed to use the washroom, I travelled the distance to the Toronto Public Reference Library across the street, because I got confused looking for the washrooms in our venue and gave up. Think about it: I was an organizer who had a responsibility to the event and to the exhibitors, and yet *even I wasn't able to locate the facilities that were our duty to offer.*

I identify as able-bodied physically, and therefore I was able to walk across the street and through an extremely crowded library to use the washrooms. Not everyone would be able to do that. To exclude folks with mobility challenges or devices from a necessary facility, is — by definition — extremely inaccessible. This is one small example, but suffice it to say that I know from experience that those of us running zine fairs need to do better.

Of course, let's look at and understand the challenges that are faced by zine fair organizers themselves. Zines are a less well-known medium, they tend to have lower price points, and there is an overall lack of finances across the zine world. It can be a challenge to afford accessible venues and the resources that make

photo by Jah Grey

fairs accessible. Finding a venue that is at the very least wheelchair accessible with accessible washrooms is — shamefully — still a huge challenge even in big Canadian cities. And of course, zine fair organizers can't really change physical aspects of the spaces or locations that are available to us.

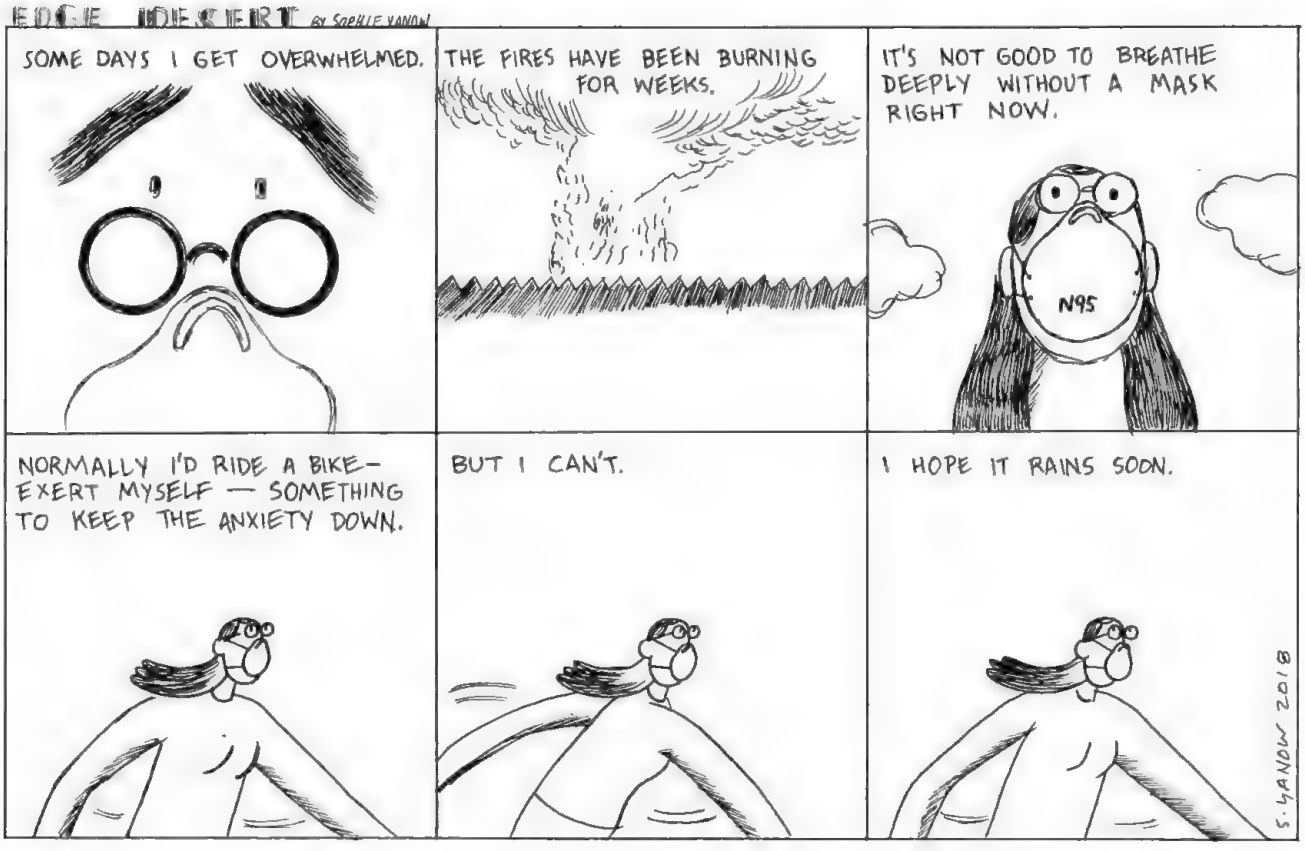
Finances can also limit other accessibility provisions. ASL interpretation or captioning options are key supports for Deaf spectrum zine artists and visitors, but they can also be prohibitively expensive and need to be budgeted for. Finding a way accommodate all needs might seem tough, though this can certainly be eased by openly asking what visitors' accessibility needs are, and trying your best to anticipate them. [*Editor's Note: Check out the Spring 2018 issue of* Broken Pencil *for some tips on making sure there aren't barriers for Deaf zinesters and visitors at your event!*]

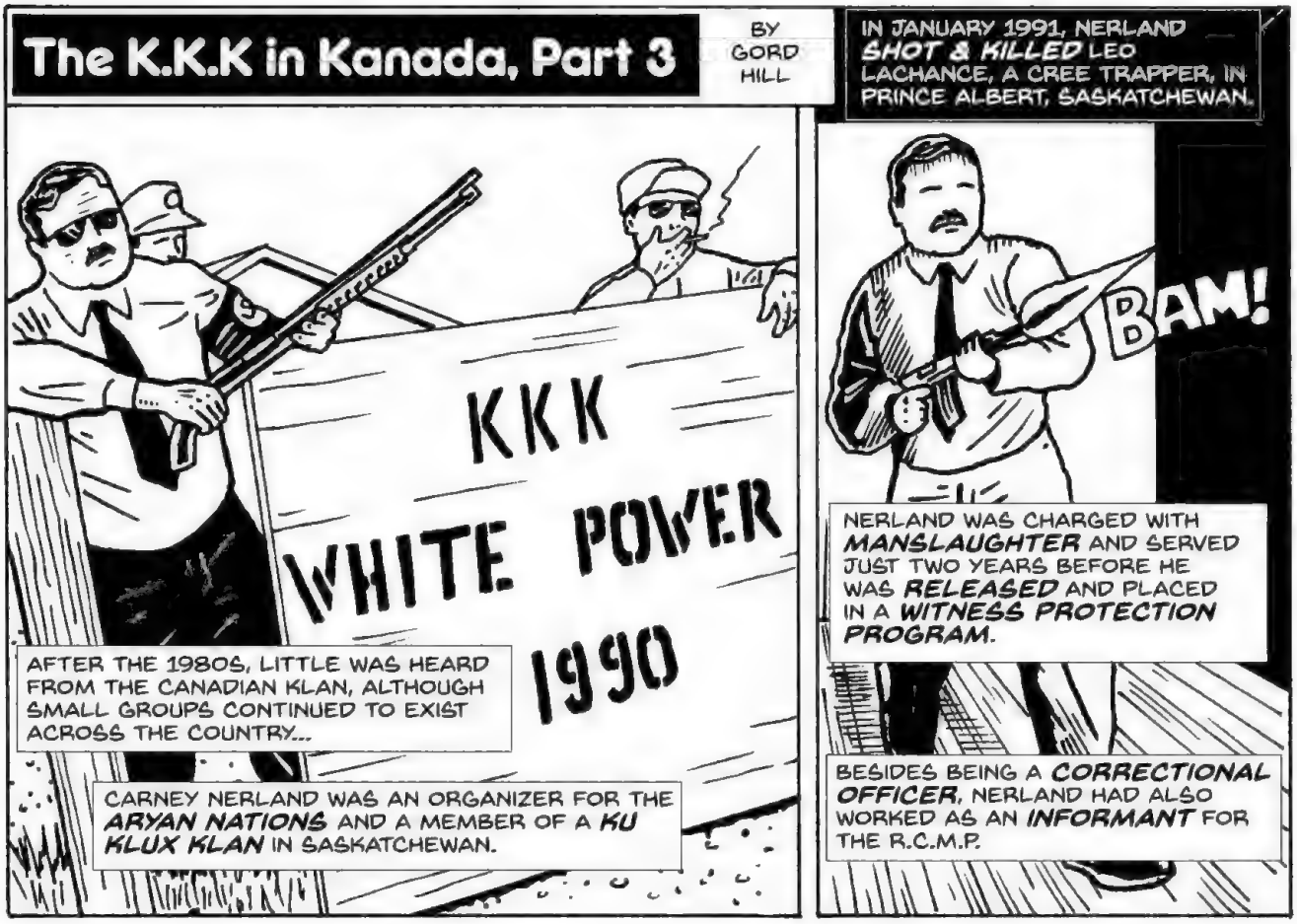
So, given the challenges presented by finances and venues, what can zine fair organizers still do to prioritize accessibility? Well, a lot!

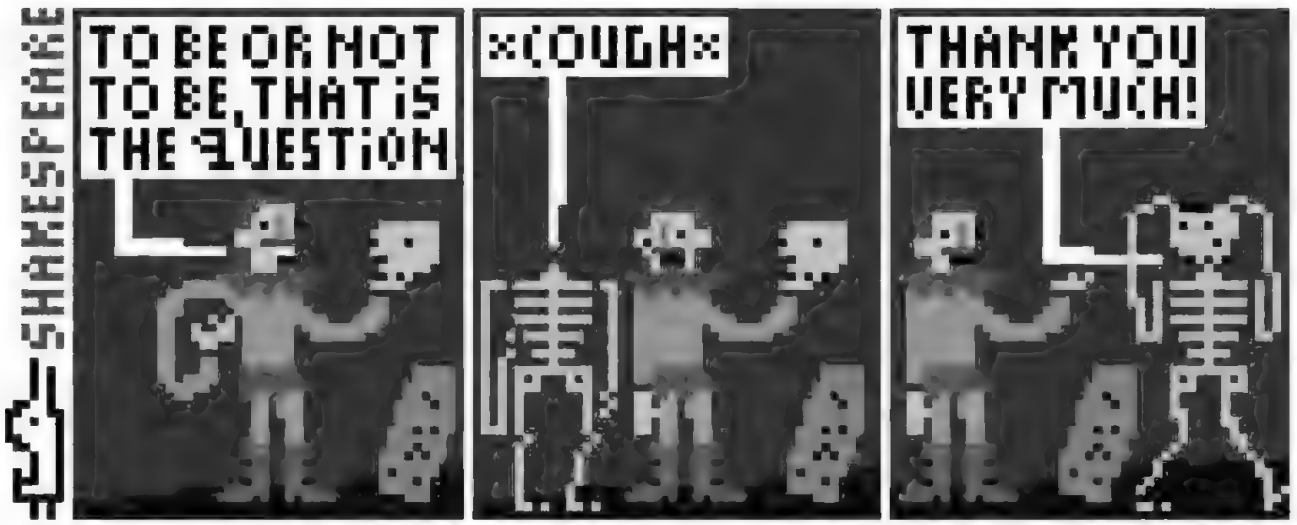
Zine fair organizers must stop and acknowledge our shortcomings in providing accessibility — and then, most importantly, identify solutions that respond to those failures. Requests, changes, and demands can be made within the limits and means of organizers. For one, you could include conditions in contracts with venues that state the needs and requirements — say, better signage, keeping doors unlocked, or having access to elevator repair services. You can let folks know what to expect of the location or the fair itself by providing clear information, maps, and guides to guests and exhibitors who may be affected by this information. Most importantly, we can hold one another accountable. Ask your communities, what is necessary for this space to be accessible? Provide contact information, allot space in the budget for contingencies, and be ready to change.

While so many zine fairs are doing better with eliminating barriers, there is always room for improvement. Let's listen to our communities and always ask: How can we make sure you feel welcome in this space?

BABCIA A papercut story by Marta Chudolińska
She was born in Imperial Russia, on the year of the Empire's death.
Though under the Tsar's command, her family and village would have passed on the cultural truth that she was born in Poland,
that she was a Polish citizen even though the shape of Poland was long gone from maps of Europe when they were children.
From the start they would have been taught to doubt one authority while devoutly trusting in another.


EDGE DESERT BY SOPHIE YANOW
SOME DAYS I GET OVERWHELMED.
THE FIRES HAVE BEEN BURNING FOR WEEKS.
IT'S NOT GOOD TO BREATHE DEEPLY WITHOUT A MASK RIGHT NOW.
N95
NORMALLY I'D RIDE A BIKE— EXERT MYSELF — SOMETHING TO KEEP THE ANXIETY DOWN.
BUT I CAN'T.
I HOPE IT RAINS SOON.
S. YANOW 2018


The K.K.K in Kanada, Part 3
BY GORD HILL
KKK
WHITE POWER
1990
AFTER THE 1980S, LITTLE WAS HEARD FROM THE CANADIAN KLAN, ALTHOUGH SMALL GROUPS CONTINUED TO EXIST ACROSS THE COUNTRY...
CARNEY NERLAND WAS AN ORGANIZER FOR THE ARYAN NATIONS AND A MEMBER OF A KU KLUX KLAN IN SASKATCHEWAN.
IN JANUARY 1991, NERLAND SHOT & KILLED LEO LACHANCE, A CREE TRAPPER, IN PRINCE ALBERT, SASKATCHEWAN.
BAM!
NERLAND WAS CHARGED WITH MANSLAUGHTER AND SERVED JUST TWO YEARS BEFORE HE WAS RELEASED AND PLACED IN A WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM.
BESIDES BEING A CORRECTIONAL OFFICER, NERLAND HAD ALSO WORKED AS AN INFORMANT FOR THE R.C.M.P.

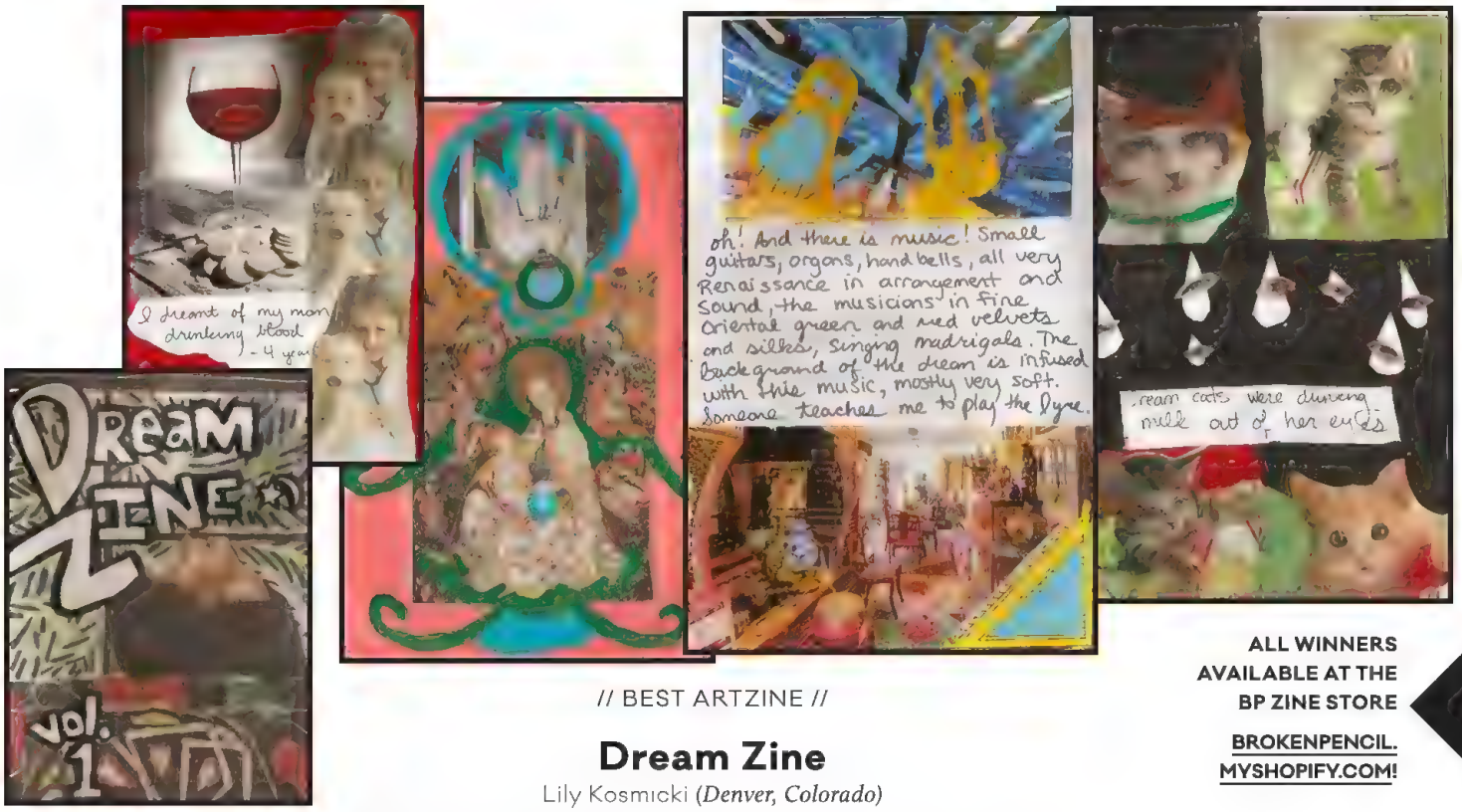


instagram.com/stevenkraan

2018 BP ZINE AWARDS

In 2018, *Broken Pencil* mounted its second ever Zine Awards! Congratulations to all of the nominees and winners, many of which are available at the Broken Pencil online store: brokenpencil.myshopify.com.

We will be accepting entries for the Zine Awards 2019 starting this Spring. For now, check out last year's winners and nominees!


I dreamt of my mom drinking blood - 4 years
Dream Zine
vol. 1
oh! And there is music! Small guitars, organs, hand bells, all very Renaissance in arrangement and sound, the musicians in fine Oriental green and red velvets and silks, singing madrigals. The background of the dream is infused with this music, mostly very soft. Someone teaches me to play the lyre.
cream cats were chewing milk out of her eyes

// BEST ARTZINE //

Dream Zine

Lily Kosmicki *(Denver, Colorado)*

CATEGORY SPONSOR: OPUS ART SUPPLIES OPUSARTSUPPLIES.COM

ALL WINNERS AVAILABLE AT THE BP ZINE STORE

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Artzines can be many things. They may be a collection of illustrations or photos, like finalist *Bajito Y Suavecito*, or they may openly toy with the form of the zine itself — like Christopher Savage's *Traces (Fragment)*, which folds out into a stunning papercut spread.

The winner of this year's Artzine category, though, is a classic collage zine, bringing together words and imagery in unexpectedly charming and innovative ways. The level of care in Lily Kosmicki's *Dream Zine* is palpable.

"This zine feels like a fever dream expanding your consciousness, using collages to collect and represent people's dreams," said Cole Pauls, last year's Broken Pencil Zine Awards winner and a judge in this year's contest.

"*Dream Zine* is a collection of dreams stolen from or given freely by friends, family, strangers, acquaintances, and even a few of my owns," explains Kosmicki. "I then comb through old newspapers and books to collage the images, waiting till I find the perfect image that matches the dream. I have a substantial collection of dreams and I house them in the zine as an incubator for their care and protection.

"If you love something or care about something or have something to say or are interested in something, make a zine" she says. "Zines are the perfect medium of creative expression because they can be about anything and made by anyone."

// ARTZINE FINALISTS //

Bajito y Suavecito
Luz Magdaleno Flores
(Chicago, Illinois)

Moonrise
Mitchell Keys
(London, Ontario)

Homes I Cannot Afford
Nikki Papp
(Vancouver, British Columbia)

Traces (Fragment)
Christopher Savage
(Calgary, Alberta)

Creatures You Meet in the Fog
Joyce Shin
(North York, Ontario)

SINCE I STARTED TESTOSTERONE OVER A YEAR AGO, THE BIGGEST REVELATION...
...ASS HAIR.
Panic Volkushka
Seven Hundred & Seventy Eight Days
Comix on Transmasculinity
BUT MUCH OF THAT BEHAVIOR IS PERFECTLY ACCEPTABLE FOR MEN IT IS OFTEN DONE, CONSCIOUSLY OR NOT, TO TAKE SPACE AWAY FROM OTHERS
I TOOK PRIDE IN FLOUTING RULES OF TRADITIONAL FEMININITY
SMOKING
DRINKING
TAKING UP SPACE
"TESTOSTERONE RAGE" IS A MYTH.

// BEST COMIC ZINE //

778 Days: Comix on Transmasculinity

Panic Volkushka *(Seattle, Washington)*

CATEGORY SPONSOR: SENECA COLLEGE - ARTS, ANIMATION & DESIGN SENECACOLLEGE.CA

Go to any zine fair in North America, and probably the world, and you will see that comics creators are self-publishing like never before. Mini-comics, experimental serial drawings, full-fledged series and unfettered graphic innovation are driving the zine scene right now. So, it's no surprise that our most competitive category is the Comic Zine.

All of these finalists could, in their own way, be winners. They're each unique in their aesthetics, form, voice, and narration. But there could only be one winner, and Panic Volkushka's *778 Days* truly charmed and made clear why it is a critical and useful personal story.

"It was great reading a comic with proper representation of transgender life," said comic artist, previous Zine Awards winner and 2018 judge Cole Pauls. "It got serious and didn't shy away from deconstructing itself."

"I wanted to make a comic book about my experiences since starting hormone replacement therapy but I was sick of just drawing myself," reflects Volkushka. "Then I remembered 'Oh, I can just make up characters and express my ideas through them! Duh!'"

// COMICS FINALISTS //

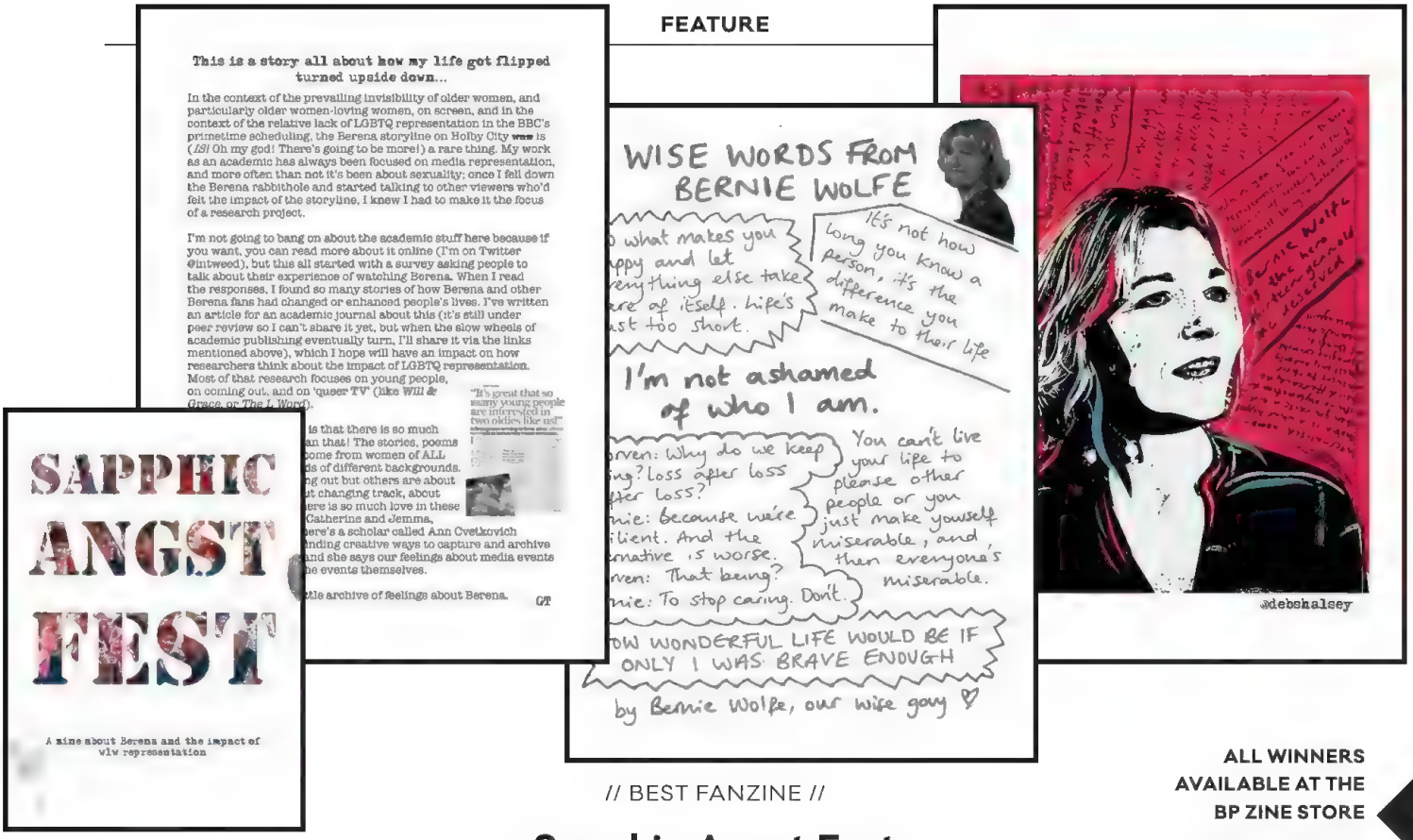
LEG
Juli Majer
(Vancouver, British Columbia)

Reverse Flaneur
M. Sabine Rear
(Portland, Oregon)

Cuidando
Kelly Fernandez
(Jackson Heights, New York)

Yo, Miss #6 Changes, Vengeance, Trump and the Eumenides
Lisa Wilde
(Brooklyn, New York)

Bacchanalia
Kimberly Edgar
(Toronto, Ontario)


This is a story all about how my life got flipped turned upside down...
In the context of the prevailing invisibility of older women, and particularly older women-loving women, on screen, and in the context of the relative lack of LGBTQ representation in the BBC's primetime scheduling, the Berena storyline on Holby City was is (IS! Oh my god! There's going to be more!) a rare thing. My work as an academic has always been focused on media representation, and more often than not it's been about sexuality; once I fell down the Berena rabbithole and started talking to other viewers who'd felt the impact of the storyline, I knew I had to make it the focus of a research project.
I'm not going to bang on about the academic stuff here because if you want, you can read more about it online (I'm on Twitter @intweed), but this all started with a survey asking people to talk about their experience of watching Berena. When I read the responses, I found so many stories of how Berena and other Berena fans had changed or enhanced people's lives. I've written an article for an academic journal about this (it's still under peer review so I can't share it yet, but when the slow wheels of academic publishing eventually turn, I'll share it via the links mentioned above), which I hope will have an impact on how researchers think about the impact of LGBTQ representation. Most of that research focuses on young people, on coming out, and on 'queer TV' (like Will & Grace, or The L Word).
SAPPHIC ANGST FEST
A zine about Berena and the impact of wlw representation
WISE WORDS FROM BERNIE WOLFE
what makes you ppy and let ery thing else take are of itself. life's ast too short.
It's not how long you know a person, it's the difference you make to their life
I'm not ashamed of who I am.
orven: Why do we keep ing? loss after loss fter loss?
nie: because we're ilient. And the rnative is worse.
rven: That being?
nie: To stop caring. Don't.
You can't live your life to please other people or you just make yourself miserable, and then everyone's miserable.
OW WONDERFUL LIFE WOULD BE IF ONLY I WAS BRAVE ENOUGH
by Bernie Wolfe, our wise guy
@debshalsey

// BEST FANZINE //

Sapphic Angst Fest

Edited by Georgina Turner *(Merseyside, UK)*

CATEGORY SPONSOR: KITTY ON FIRE RECORDS KITTYONFIRERECORDS.COM

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Many people trace the origin of what we call zines today to sci-fi fanzines of the 1930s and '40s. Enthusiasts of H.G. Wells, H.P. Lovecraft, and other acronym-based writers of eerie worlds couldn't get enough, and they started writing their own publications, expanding the worlds these authors built and sending them to each other in the mail, thus dubbed fanzines.

But of course in the '80s, punks reclaimed the term for their own purposes. Reviews of basement hardcore shows and obscure tapes appeared in legendary zines like *Maximum Rocknroll* and other far more obscure publications. And then, with the advent of hardcore geekdom and otaku culture, we're currently experiencing a wave of illustrated fanzines organized over Tumblr and Twitter. These mostly obsess over anime characters, movies, and video game series. For this category, we got zines of all kinds, ones about punk music, drag queens, pizza, and Ween.

Yet, the winner for this one came out of left field. *Sapphic Angst Fest*, edited by Georgina Turner from Merseyside, UK, is a fanzine celebrating lesbian representation in the semi-popular British TV show *Holby City*.

"I'm a media academic and I was working on a project talking to fans of a TV show about what it means to them, and the difference that LGBTQ+ representation made to their lives. People were sharing these incredible stories with me," explained Turner. "So a zine that enabled people to express their feelings about this love story between two women on prime time British television seemed not just a good idea, but kind of necessary."

Turner was surprised to hear they were nominated. "I figured most people would never have heard of *Holby City*, let alone Berena, the Sapphic ship we love," she told *Broken Pencil*. But indeed, the obscurity of the reference was transcended by the passion of the project.

"This kind of zine is culturally so important," said judge Cole Pauls, who despite not knowing the show was moved by the fervour of the fandom. "Seeing a community of women express their love for proper lesbian representation is very refreshing."

// FANZINE FINALISTS //

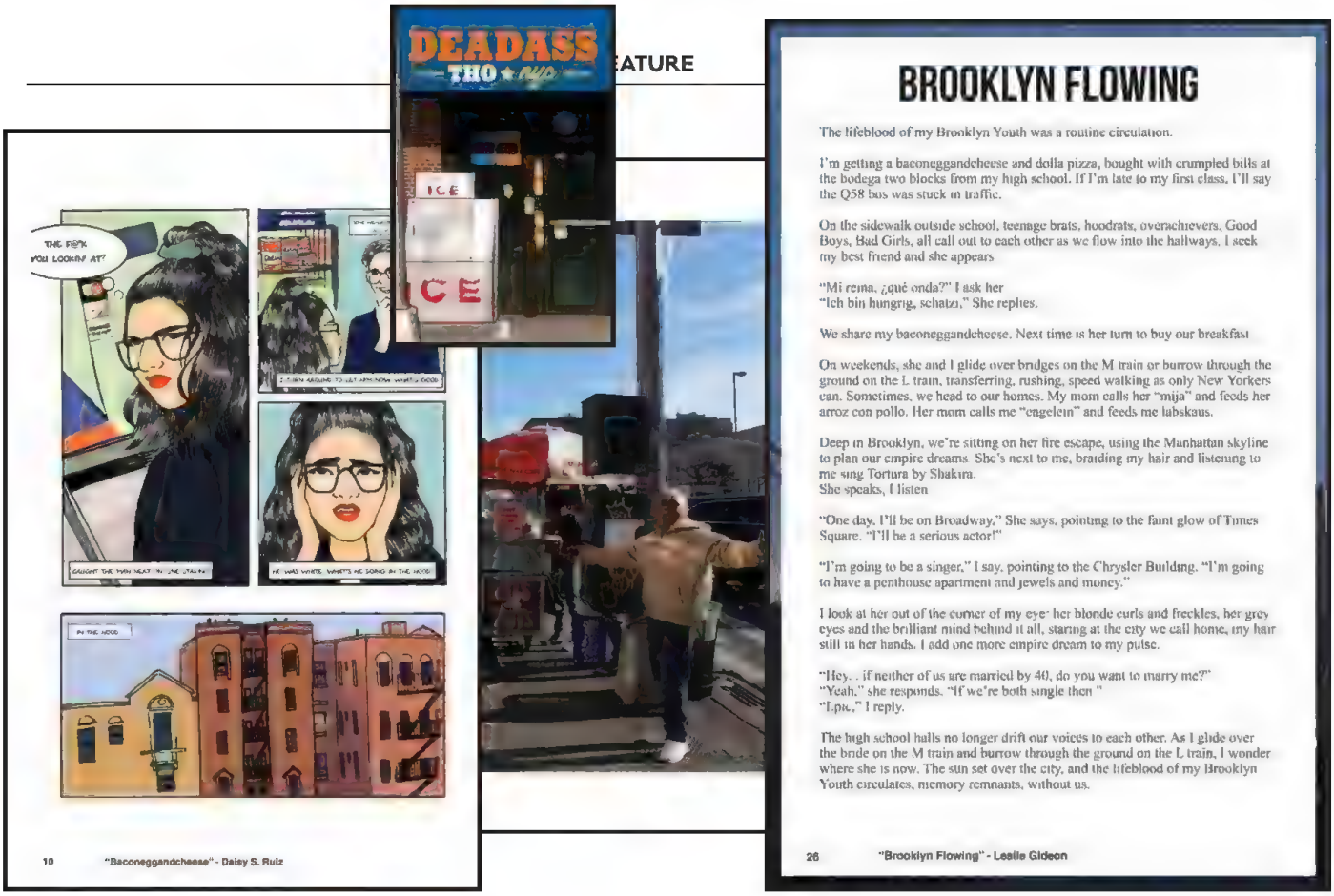
Tales From the Main Stage
Tim Bauer
(Vancouver, British Columbia)

Hoser Punx
Shelby Monita
(Toronto, Ontario)

Don't Get 2 Close (2 My Fanzine) aka The Ween Zine
Eli Schwab
(Los Angeles, California)

CHIZZA #1
Florian Rittmeyer
(Evanston, Illinois)

Kouign Amann
Mandy Paradise
(Olympia, Washington)


DEADASS THO NYC
ICE
ICE
THE FUCK YOU LOOKIN AT?
10 "Baconeggandcheese" - Daisy S. Ruiz
BROOKLYN FLOWING
The lifeblood of my Brooklyn Youth was a routine circulation.
I'm getting a baconeggandcheese and dolla pizza, bought with crumpled bills at the bodega two blocks from my high school. If I'm late to my first class, I'll say the Q58 bus was stuck in traffic.
On the sidewalk outside school, teenage brats, hoodrats, overachievers, Good Boys, Bad Girls, all call out to each other as we flow into the hallways. I seek my best friend and she appears.
"Mi reina, ¿qué onda?" I ask her
"Ich bin hungrig, schatzi," She replies.
We share my baconeggandcheese. Next time is her turn to buy our breakfast
On weekends, she and I glide over bridges on the M train or burrow through the ground on the L train, transferring, rushing, speed walking as only New Yorkers can. Sometimes, we head to our homes. My mom calls her "mija" and feeds her arroz con pollo. Her mom calls me "engelein" and feeds me labskaus.
Deep in Brooklyn, we're sitting on her fire escape, using the Manhattan skyline to plan our empire dreams. She's next to me, braiding my hair and listening to me sing Tortura by Shakira.
She speaks, I listen
"One day, I'll be on Broadway," She says, pointing to the faint glow of Times Square. "I'll be a serious actor!"
"I'm going to be a singer," I say, pointing to the Chrysler Building. "I'm going to have a penthouse apartment and jewels and money."
I look at her out of the corner of my eye: her blonde curls and freckles, her grey eyes and the brilliant mind behind it all, staring at the city we call home, my hair still in her hands. I add one more empire dream to my pulse.
"Hey... if neither of us are married by 40, do you want to marry me?"
"Yeah," she responds. "If we're both single then."
"I pie," I reply.
The high school halls no longer drift our voices to each other. As I glide over the bride on the M train and burrow through the ground on the L train, I wonder where she is now. The sun set over the city, and the lifeblood of my Brooklyn Youth circulates, memory remnants, without us.
26 "Brooklyn Flowing" - Leslie Gideon

// BEST COMPILATION ZINE //

Deadass Tho NYC, Vol. 2

Edited by Travis Hewitt-Roach and Daisy S Ruiz *(Brooklyn, New York)*

Last year, the Broken Pencil Zine Awards only offered five categories for consideration. Yet, our panel of esteemed judges — overwhelmed by anthologies and compilations — struck out and made a new award category: the Compilation Zine!

And they were right to do so. We got tons of submissions in this category, from zines that were the result of a workshop series, to sleek literary and photo anthologies, to risograph collaborations. And the winner, *Deadass Tho NYC, Vol. 2*, epitomized why a plurality of voices can sometimes be the absolutely necessary approach for a project. With a blend of comics, poetry, essays and other art, it strikes the perfect balance.

"Reading this zine made me feel like I transported right into the middle of the Bronx!" said judge Monica Trinidad. "The fresh, straight-shooting, compilation of art, comics, and short stories highlighted the ominous gentrification of NYC neighbourhoods ('Unsanitary' cracked me up), and the pangs of being young girls in a big city. This zine felt like a glimpse into how young people of colour are coping through art-making, and I wish more zines like this were created, uplifted, and valued."

"My first experience with zines was at a local zine event held in my home borough the Bronx, NY back in the winter of 2016," explains Daisy Zamora, one of the zine's co-editors. "The first zine I purchased there was titled *Cell Series*, a fold-out zine with pictures of El Paso, Texas, by Itzel Alejandra Martinez. The loose format and self-published expression struck me as powerful and independent, and allowed me to create a platform for spotlighting New York-based artists."

"I was thrilled to be nominated, particularly being a publication based in New York City, and being recognized all the way out in Toronto, Canada," she adds.

// COMPILATION ZINE FINALISTS //

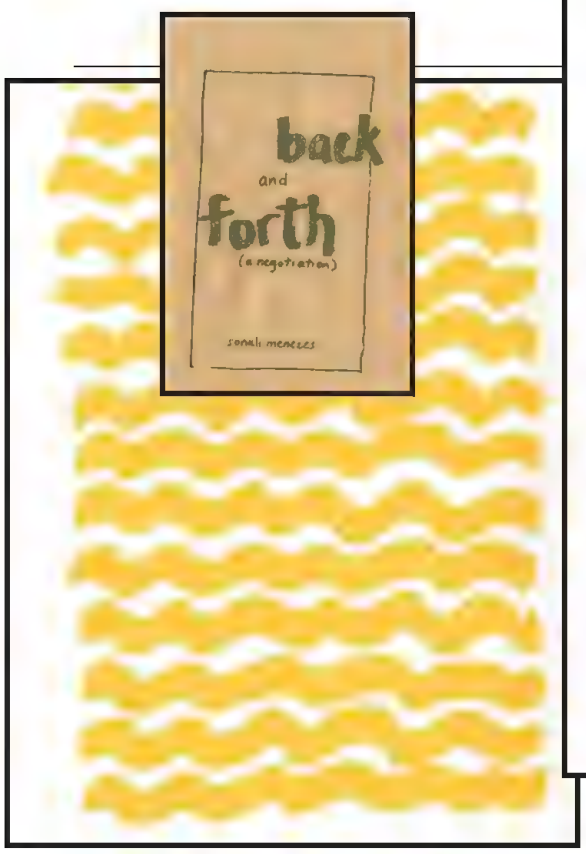
Dear Journal, Issue 3
Laina Hughes & Dunja Kovacevic
(Winnipeg, Manitoba)

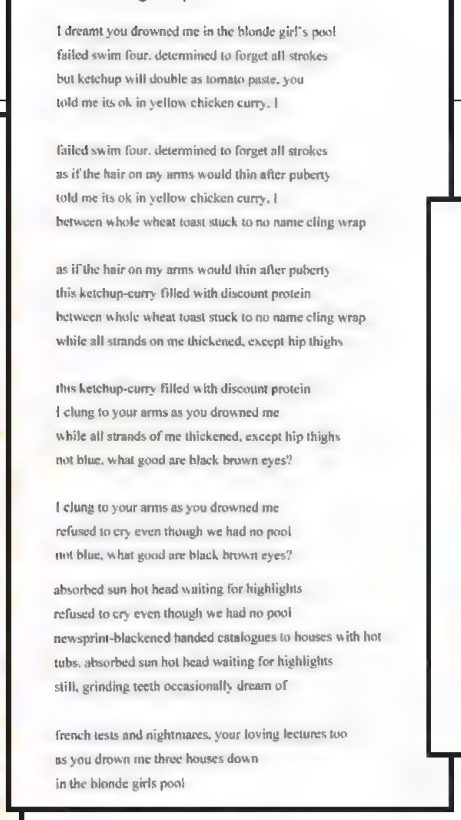
Emotional Magazine
Una Di Gallo
(Stoney Creek, Ontario)

Happy If You Know It
With/out Pretend
(Toronto, Ontario)

From the Root Issue 4 Home
Whitney French and Timaj Garad
(Toronto, Ontario)

Almost Everything But a Cat
Karolina Ficek
(Vaughan, Ontario)




I dreamt you drowned me in the blonde girl's pool
failed swim four. determined to forget all strokes
but ketchup will double as tomato paste. you
told me its ok in yellow chicken curry. I

failed swim four. determined to forget all strokes
as if the hair on my arms would thin after puberty
told me its ok in yellow chicken curry. I
between whole wheat toast stuck to no name cling wrap

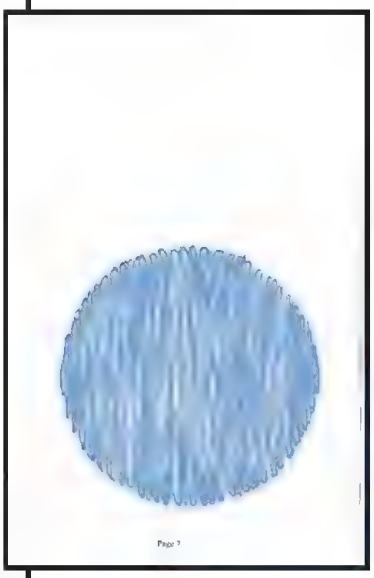
as if the hair on my arms would thin after puberty
this ketchup-curry filled with discount protein
between whole wheat toast stuck to no name cling wrap
while all strands on me thickened, except hip thighs

this ketchup-curry filled with discount protein
I clung to your arms as you drowned me
while all strands of me thickened, except hip thighs
not blue. what good are black brown eyes?

I clung to your arms as you drowned me
refused to cry even though we had no pool
not blue. what good are black brown eyes?

absorbed sun hot head waiting for highlights
refused to cry even though we had no pool
newsprint-blackened handed catalogues to houses with hot
tubs. absorbed sun hot head waiting for highlights
still, grinding teeth occasionally dream of

french tests and nightmares, your loving lectures too
as you drown me three houses down
in the blonde girls pool



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// BEST LITZINE //

Back and Forth (a negotiation)

Sonali Menezes of Glittering Magpiee *(Hamilton, Ontario)*

CATEGORY SPONSOR: SENECA COLLEGE - ARTS, ANIMATION & DESIGN SENECACOLLEGE.CA

What makes a litzine? How is it different from a chapbook or a novella? And how do zines and self-publishing create new openings and opportunities for writers to experiment?

These are complicated questions, and we welcomed submissions in this category that challenged our expectations about where these different approaches intersect. Some had images, some had text only, and many were carefully bound and lovingly made.

In the winning zine, *Back and Forth (a negotiation)* by Sonali Menezes, the poem "Deferred" muses, "to hold / a contradiction like a cup of cold coffee in / palms nearing cracked lips and if / potatoes grow arms in the darkness / of drawers I could try to / regurgitate your laughter."

This blend of fleeting, evocative images with echoes of motion, fast and slow, becomes the zine's thematic container. But the content also elaborates the edges of Menezes' political and personal identities.

"The zine felt like a short yet powerful punch at colonialism and the realities of diaspora life for brown people in North America," said Zine Awards judge Monica Trinidad. "Sonali's writing made me feel like the 'negotiation' was reaching a breaking point, and I could feel the pressure building up."

"I'm pretty self-conscious about my poetry. I make myself a lot more vulnerable and I share aspects of myself rather candidly which I haven't done through other forms of art-making," said Menezes. "A zine made this process of sharing my poems with the world for the first time a lot less intimidating!"

"The wonderful thing about zines is that your ideas can be rough, half-formed, still evolving, and you can share it anyways, zines don't need to be precious," she adds.

// LITZINE FINALISTS //

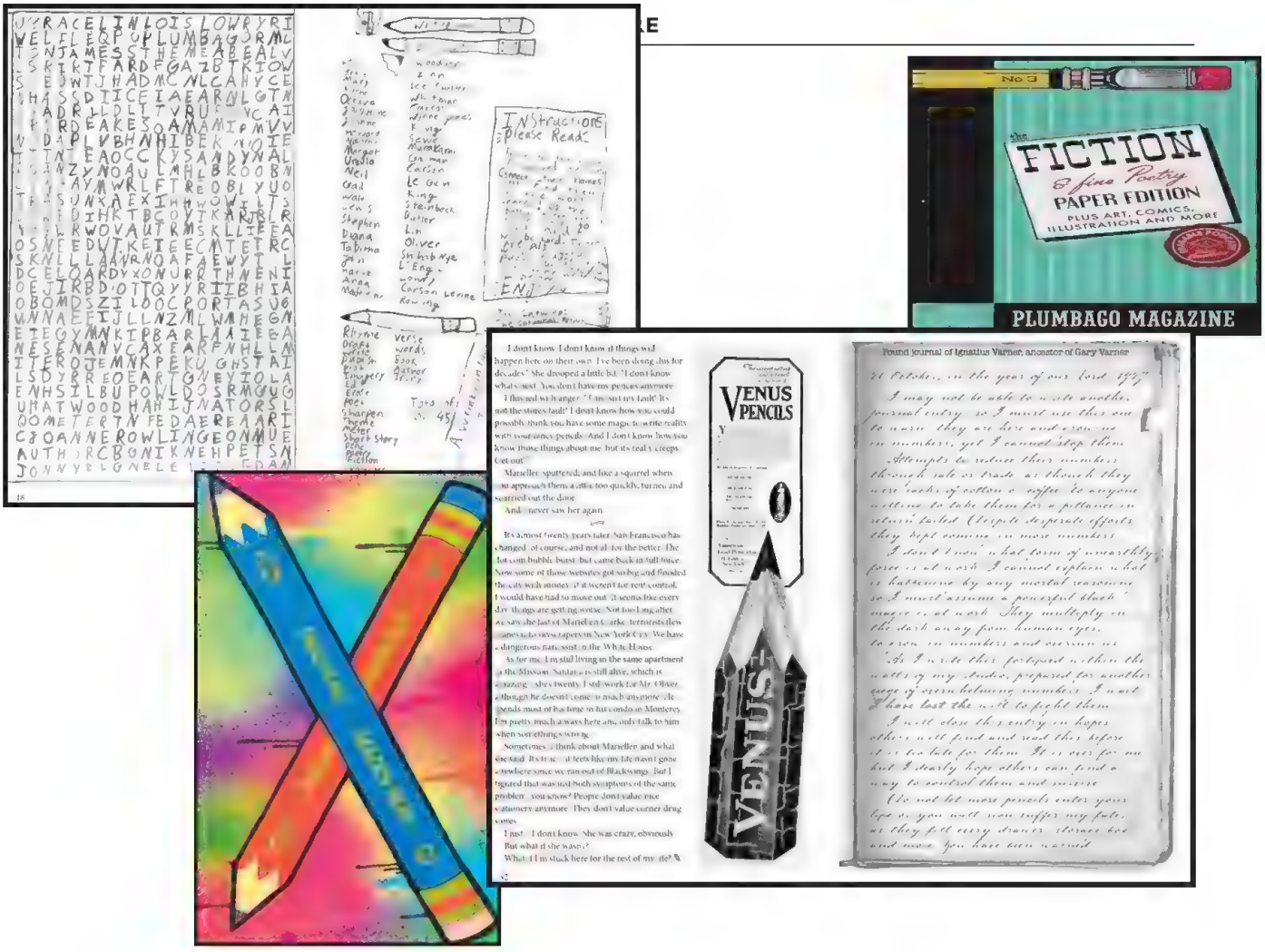
The Story of the Orca's Silver Tongue as Told by the Manager of the Only Taco Bell in Juno
Nina Budabin McQuown and Laura Stinson
(Washington, DC)

The Eyes of The Chest
Kate Folk and Tobias Goodshank
(Brooklyn, New York)

Translanguaging
Winston Le
(Langley, British Columbia)

Just Another Self-Portrait
China Marsot-Wood
(Montreal, Quebec)

WHYVALE
Michael McGlennon
(Toronto, Ontario)


No 3
the FICTION & fine Poetry PAPER EDITION
PLUS ART, COMICS, ILLUSTRATION AND MORE
PLUMBAGO MAGAZINE
INSTRUCTIONS Please Read:
VENUS PENCILS
VENUS
Found journal of Ignatius Varner, ancestor of Gary Varner

// BEST MICRO-LITERARY JOURNAL //

Plumbago Magazine Issue 3

Edited by Andy Welfle *(San Francisco, California)*

CATEGORY SPONSOR: SENECA COLLEGE - ARTS, ANIMATION & DESIGN SENECACOLLEGE.CA

Last year we found that lots of indie literary journals and magazines wanted to submit to the Zine Awards, but weren't sure if it was the right place for them. And while they aren't traditional litzines — which do have a category of their own — we did end up getting some awesome submissions. So this year, a new category for small journals and magazines printing fiction, poetry, and literary nonfiction.

From Toronto-based *WORDASHES*, a bimonthly feminist magazine that collects writing and media about topics like sexuality, body image, and mental health, to San Diego's *Is That So? Issue 9*, cheekily themed as the "mom why did you give my Bop-It to Amvets" issue, we were delighted by the response to this new category. And we couldn't be more tickled that the winner was the pencil-themed *Plumbago Magazine*, edited by Andy Welfle from San Francisco.

"I submitted my zine on a lark, but I never thought I'd get to the final shortlist, let alone win the category," said Welfle.

"*Plumbago* was such a refreshing read, mixed with beautiful sketches, evoking a classic, analog object in an overly digital world," said Zine Awards judge Monica Trinidad. "'The Life of a Pencil' by Father Kyle Sanders stood out the most. It's a seriously hilarious and melodramatic life story from the perspective of a pencil."

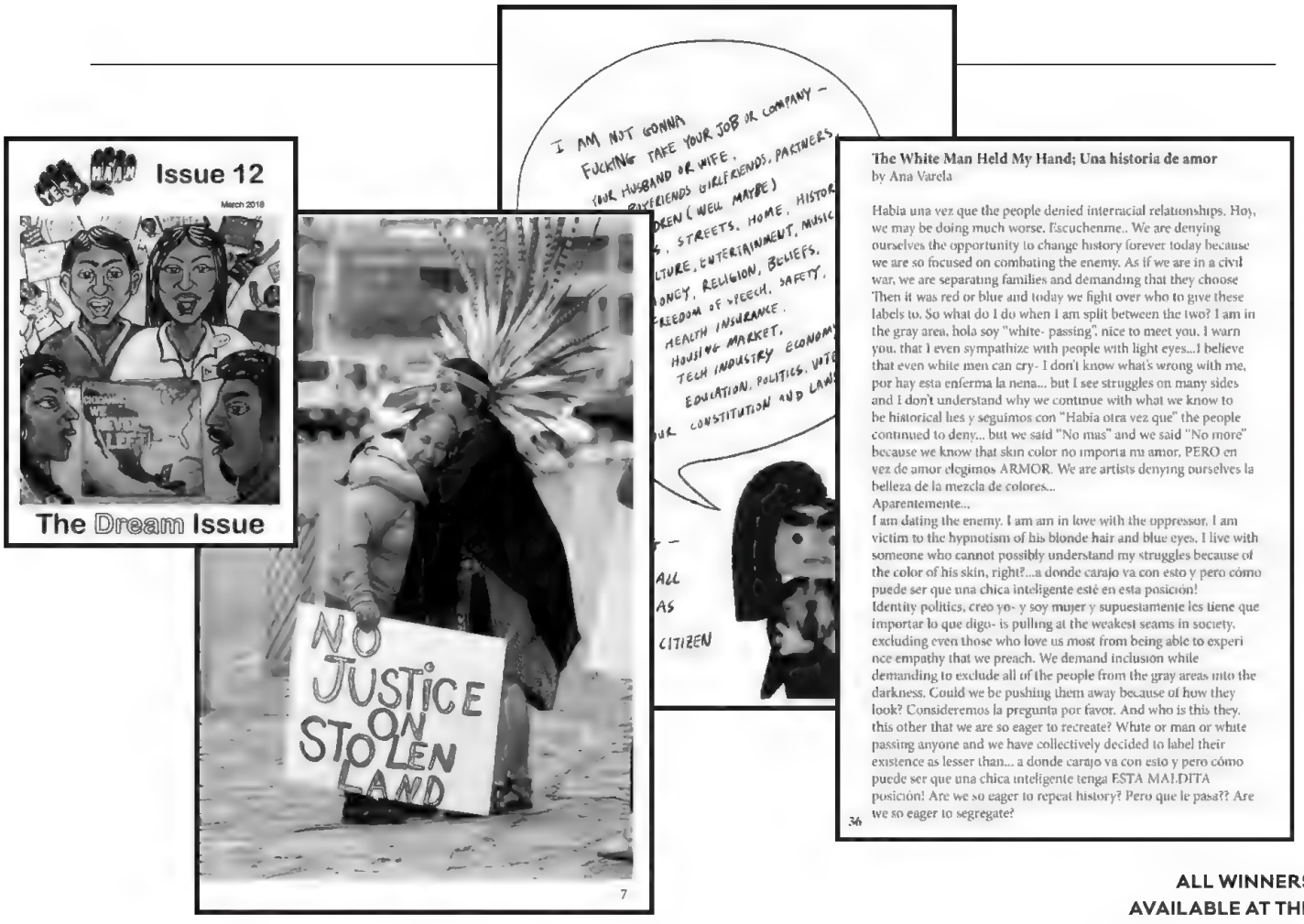
// MICRO-LITERARY JOURNAL FINALISTS //

Into the Void, Issue #8
Philip Elliott
(Toronto, Ontario)

Boy Tears Mag, #1
Ry
(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

Is That So? Issue 9
Catherine Snow
(San Diego, California)

WORDASHES, Issue 2
Nina V. Rye & Masha Baur
(Toronto, Ontario)


Issue 12
March 2018
The Dream Issue
NO JUSTICE ON STOLEN LAND
7
I AM NOT GONNA
FUCKING TAKE YOUR JOB OR COMPANY —
YOUR HUSBAND OR WIFE,
BOYFRIENDS GIRLFRIENDS, PARTNERS
ALL
AS
CITIZEN
The White Man Held My Hand; Una historia de amor
by Ana Varela
Habia una vez que the people denied interracial relationships. Hoy, we may be doing much worse. Escuchenme.. We are denying ourselves the opportunity to change history forever today because we are so focused on combating the enemy. As if we are in a civil war, we are separating families and demanding that they choose Then it was red or blue and today we fight over who to give these labels to. So what do I do when I am split between the two? I am in the gray area, hola soy "white- passing", nice to meet you. I warn you, that I even sympathize with people with light eyes...I believe that even white men can cry- I don't know what's wrong with me, por hay esta enferma la nena... but I see struggles on many sides and I don't understand why we continue with what we know to be historical lies y seguimos con "Habia otra vez que" the people continued to deny... but we said "No mas" and we said "No more" because we know that skin color no importa mi amor, PERO en vez de amor elegimos ARMOR. We are artists denying ourselves la belleza de la mezcla de colores...
Aparentemente...
I am dating the enemy. I am am in love with the oppressor. I am victim to the hypnotism of his blonde hair and blue eyes. I live with someone who cannot possibly understand my struggles because of the color of his skin, right?...a donde carajo va con esto y pero cómo puede ser que una chica inteligente esté en esta posición!
Identity politics, creo yo- y soy mujer y supuestamente les tiene que importar lo que digo- is pulling at the weakest seams in society. excluding even those who love us most from being able to experi nce empathy that we preach. We demand inclusion while demanding to exclude all of the people from the gray areas into the darkness. Could we be pushing them away because of how they look? Consideremos la pregunta por favor. And who is this they, this other that we are so eager to recreate? White or man or white passing anyone and we have collectively decided to label their existence as lesser than... a donde carajo va con esto y pero cómo puede ser que una chica inteligente tenga ESTA MALDITA posición! Are we so eager to repeat history? Pero que le pasa?? Are we so eager to segregate?
36

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// BEST POLITICAL ZINE //

Yes, Ma'am, Issue 12: The Dream Issue

By Yes, Ma'am *(San Antonio, Texas)*

The alternative and underground press has always been fuelled by political action and knowledge sharing. Zines remain an important tool and resource for political organizing and community building around the world.

This year's winning zine comes from *Yes, Ma'am*, a serial distro out of San Antonio, Texas. In *The Dream Issue*, a range of voices come together to cover topics like anti-Latinx racism, immigration, indigeneity, gender, and preserving Chicanx communities against the very real threats we face today.

"The breadth of emotion, images, poetry, essays covered in this zine about immigration is impressive," said Cindy Crabb, one of this year's judges for the Zine Awards. "And so essential to connect with the transforming and mobilizing power of artistic expression in these horrifying times. "

"*Yes, Ma'am* came about when two feminist college students needed a way to express themselves," explains Suzy González and Elle Minter, the co-creators of the zine. "[It is] about providing a platform to uplift the voices of other womxn and non-binary folx. It's important to us to provide access to a range of intersectional perspectives."

// POLITICAL ZINE FINALISTS //

Don't Hate My Heels: A Confrontation with Whorephobia in Which Whores Win
A Loose Collective of Loose Women
(Los Angeles, California)

The American Indian Ready To Wear Catalog 2018
Joey Clift
(North Hollywood, California)

Restore Your Right to Vote!
Aggie Toppins
(Chattanooga, Tennessee)

Co-op Alternatives Issue 1: Con-Post
Stony Mountain Anna, Tam, Donald & Nicholas
(Winnipeg, Manitoba)

Testify!
Bronwyn Mauldin
(Glendale, California)

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BEST OVERALL ZINE AND BEST PERZINE

Hair

Anand Vedawala *(San Francisco, California)*

The perzine genre anchors zine culture in so many ways. Perhaps undersung in lieu of the sometimes flashier categories — glossy photo zines, colourful comics, and eyecatching chapbooks — perzines are zinester's zines. Often they are cut-n-paste, black and white zines with low price points, multiple issues made of dense blocks of typewriter text spilling mini-essays and diary entries about deep, personal questions and the outer fringes of identity and pain. Yet, there are also folks who make new space in the genre for one-off projects, digital design or even blends with more literary or image-based work.

The finalists for this genre reflect that range, including classic perzines like *Living Not Existing* and *Old Haunts* as well as sleeker options like *GLXTCH* and our eventual winner, the compelling and courageous *Hair* by Anand Vedawala.

"The subject of masculine beauty standards are still fairly taboo," our judge and perzine expert Cindy Crabb says. This zine cracks open the subject with personal stories of being a hairy man. I love how it moves through childhood, family, being a teacher, and being a lover. The way people feel they have the right to comment, touch, give advice, shame and critique this male body without consent is articulated with such eloquence, pain, and humour.

"It's a really powerful opening that I hope other men will follow."

Because of its unique subject matter and elegant composition, *Hair* is both the winner of its category and the overall winner of the Broken Pencil Zine Awards 2018. And to think the zine was something of an accident!

"*Hair* came about because a friend asked me to talk at [his] tape release show," explains creator Vedawala. "Anxious and unprepared, I managed to talk about hair... I refer to it as my not-really-stand-up stand-up routine because I thought I was just telling a story, but people were laughing and applauding. I even had a heckler! After the set, another friend suggested I do something more with my routine. 'It's too good to just be a one-time thing.' He said it would make a great zine. "

It's an honour to be able to celebrate all of the ways zines and personal stories come to being. Vedawala told us that winning the zine awards has been "thrilling, unbelievable, surprising and humbling," even though he doubted himself in submitting for the Zine Awards. "I'm glad I convinced myself to apply," he adds.

As for other zinesters and creators thinking about sharing their own stories to the world, the BPZA champ has this advice: "Document your experiences, speak up and know that there are others who will understand, acknowledge and accept you. Believe in your work; it's better than you think."

anandvedawala.com

// PERZINE FINALISTS//

Heirs
Christina L'Eucatastrophe
(Lachine, Quebec)

Old Haunts
Dan Brenner
(Ridgewood, New York)

My Year in the Dark
Rachel Schwartz Fagan
(Toronto, Ontario)

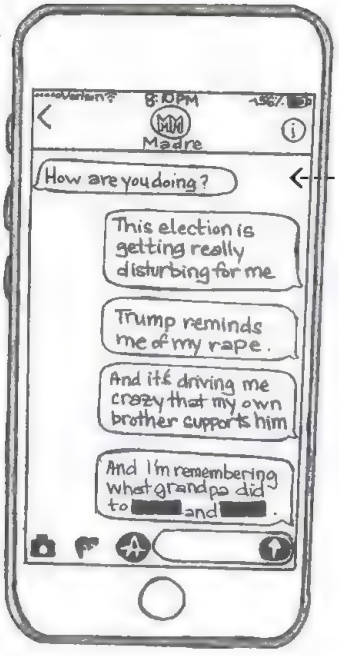
GLXTCH issue .03 – "im(prism)ment"
Lana C. Marilyn
(Brooklyn, New York)

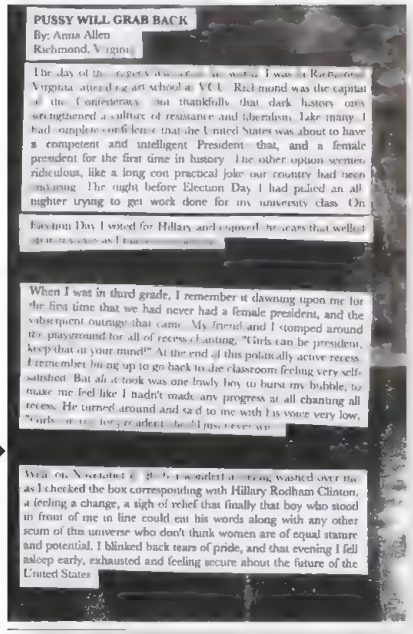
Living Not Existing #4
Faith
(Toronto, Ontario)

10 Radical Zines Talking Back to Trump

by Liz Mason

FOR THE PAST 17 YEARS I've worked at Quimby's Bookstore here in Chicago, which sells zines, mini-comics, and books. We've always been a place friendly to independent publishers, with a pretty open consignment agreement (download our agreement at quimbys.com and send us your zines!), so we never know what's going to arrive in the mail. Thus, the store tends to reflect whatever trends are happening in indie publishing. In this time of unrest, many of the zines we receive express horror, anxiety, and anger about our current political situation and, yes, the American Commander-in-Chief Donald Trump. Here I've rounded up 10 zines doing just that — talking back to Trump and calling everybody to action.


8:10PM
Madre
How are you doing?
This election is getting really disturbing for me
Trump reminds me of my rape.
And it's driving me crazy that my own brother supports him
And I'm remembering what grandpa did to [redacted] and [redacted].


PUSSY WILL GRAB BACK
By: Anna Allen
Richmond, Virginia

The day of the [redacted] election was weird. I was in Richmond, Virginia attending art school at VCU. Richmond was the capital of the Confederacy, but thankfully that dark history only strengthened a culture of resistance and liberalism. Like many, I had complete confidence that the United States was about to have a competent and intelligent President – that, and a female president for the first time in history. The other option seemed ridiculous, like a long con practical joke our country had been enduring. The night before Election Day I had pulled an all nighter trying to get work done for my university class. On Election Day I voted for Hillary and rejoiced in tears that welled [redacted]

When I was in third grade, I remember it dawning upon me for the first time that we had never had a female president, and the subsequent outrage that came. My friends and I stomped around the playground for all of recess chanting, "Girls can be president, keep that in your mind!" At the end of this politically active recess, I remember lining up to go back to the classroom feeling very self-satisfied. But all it took was one lowly boy to burst my bubble, to make me feel like I hadn't made any progress at all chanting all recess. He turned around and said to me with his voice very low, "Girls [redacted]

[redacted] on November [redacted] I wondered [redacted] as I checked the box corresponding with Hillary Rodham Clinton, a feeling a change, a sigh of relief that finally that boy who stood in front of me in line could eat his words along with any other scum of this universe who don't think women are of equal stature and potential. I blinked back tears of pride, and that evening I fell asleep early, exhausted and feeling secure about the future of the United States

November 9: Where Were You?

BY // Wing Woman Press

This zine asks people to detail what they were doing the night Trump was elected and collects their responses. I can tell you where I was. I was glued to my TV set in disbelief, thinking that we were in some alternate reality. It's preposterous, of course. I actually found it more believable that the laws of physics would alter my position in the universe such that I would be in a totally different reality, before I would believe that Donald Trump would be our 45th president. Upon opening this zine, I saw I wasn't the only one that believed the alternate reality hypothesis.

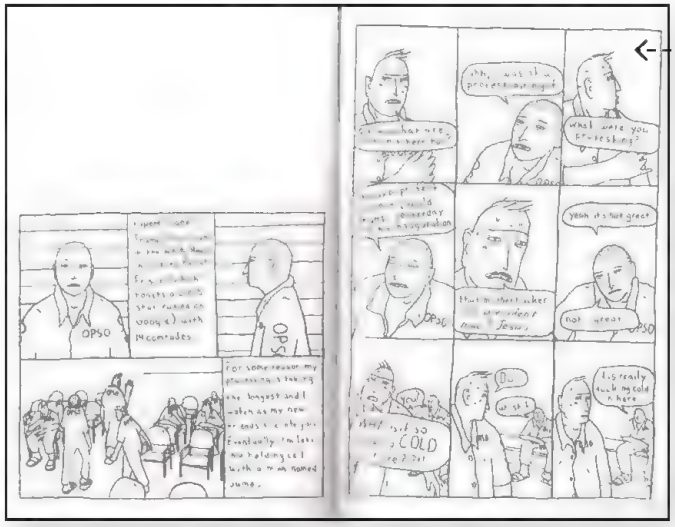
instagram.com/wingwomanpp or **wingwomanpress@gmail.com**

Where You Stand #1

BY // T. Baumle

This elegantly drawn mini-comic is part one of the story of a year of antiracist and anarchist struggle in New Orleans after the 2016 election. Although the artist says it's fiction, it's clearly written by someone engaged in a life devoted to protes, such as marches (and what happens when organizing assemblies turn ecstatic energy to bureaucracy over time), filling downtime during unemployment by hanging radical posters, and even doing a stint in jail. This is what you have to look forward to protesting The Man in the the Big Easy. Spoiler: it's not so easy.

tbaumle@riseup.net, **@t_baumle**

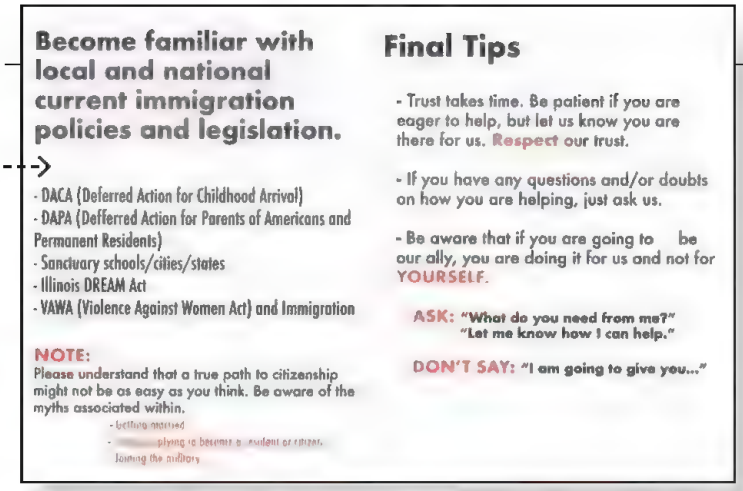


Trump Reminds Me of My Rape

BY // Ifer Moore, illustrations & K.V. Natan

In chronological order, Moore writes about haunting moments of sexual assault and the related fallout. These episodes are accompanied by illustrations by K.V. Natan of the things that provided solace in the moment, like salt and pepper shakers on the table during a heated family discussion about a sexually abusive grandparent. Each vignette reads like a verse, and by the time Trump shows up at the end, with his pussy grabbing rape allegations, Moore has set up a thoughtful case for why the personal is not only political but also powerfully poetic. All proceeds of this zine go to Planned Parenthood.

ifermoore.bigcartel.com

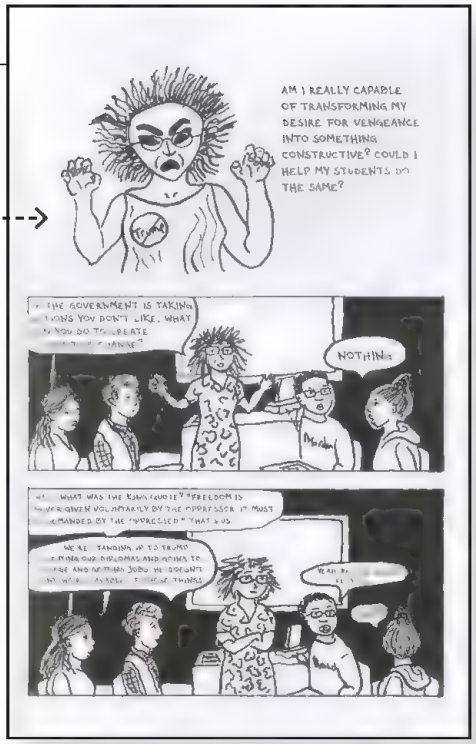

Become familiar with local and national current immigration policies and legislation.
- DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival)
- DAPA (Defferred Action for Parents of Americans and Permanent Residents)
- Sanctuary schools/cities/states
- Illinois DREAM Act
- VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) and Immigration
NOTE:
Please understand that a true path to citizenship might not be as easy as you think. Be aware of the myths associated within.
Final Tips
- Trust takes time. Be patient if you are eager to help, but let us know you are there for us. Respect our trust.
- If you have any questions and/or doubts on how you are helping, just ask us.
- Be aware that if you are going to be our ally, you are doing it for us and not for YOURSELF.
ASK: "What do you need from me?" "Let me know how I can help."
DON'T SAY: "I am going to give you..."

UNDOCU-ALLY: A Guide on How to Be a Good Ally For Undocumented Immigrants

BY // Undocumented Projects

In spite of the current US administration's attempts at building walls (both physical and metaphorical), this zine seeks to help folks create protection for all within the U.S. If you're in a position to help, this is the zine for you. It gives tips on helpful things to do and say/not say, wording to use when talking to folks with whom you wish to help, how to become familiar with US immigration policies and legislation, and notes on common myths about the path to citizenship. And, frankly, a lot of the etiquette stuff is actually helpful no matter what country you're in

undocumentedprojects.org


AM I REALLY CAPABLE OF TRANSFORMING MY DESIRE FOR VENGEANCE INTO SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE? COULD I HELP MY STUDENTS DO THE SAME?
NOTHING
WE'RE TAKING IT TO TRUMP

Yo, Miss #6: Changes, Vengeance, Trump & the Eumenides

BY // Lisa Wilde

"Since Trump's election, expressing hate and ignorance seems to have become acceptable," writes Lisa Wilde in this mini-comic about attempting to survive the Trump presidency. She's an English teacher at a second chance public high school in Lower Manhattan. After the 2016 election, she was faced with the challenge of easing her students' anxieties about very real racial tensions. It's already frustrating getting through this presidency. But being a teacher for a low-income demographic that is facing discrimination and even deportation adds another level of stress. It's admirable to see the artist attempt to turn anger and vengefulness into something constructive a truly teachable moment.

Yo, Miss #6 was a finalist in Broken Pencil's Zine Awards, see page 13

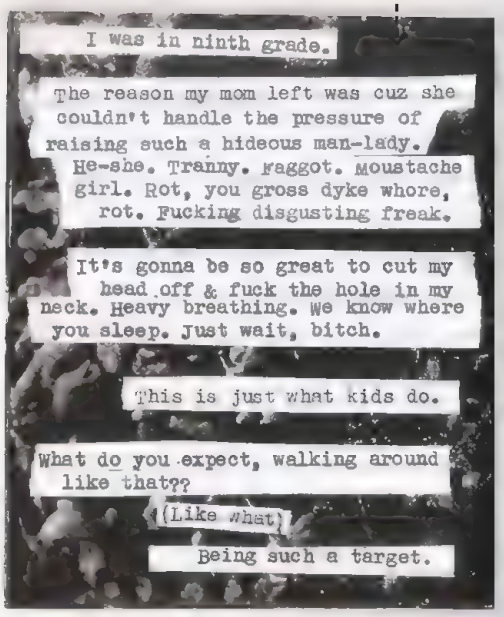
microcosmpublishing.com

No Salvation // No Forgiveness

BY // Julia Eff

This elaborate fantasy about trapping Brett Kavanaugh in an elevator and screaming at him is just my style of righteous anger (the best kind). Provoked by the deluge of toxic masculinity in the controversy surrounding the Department of Justice (and the entire White House), Julia Eff rants about their personal experience with the repercussions of sexual abuse, harassment due to gender non-conformity, and other raw and relevant tragedies, all of which seem exactly the types of things one would want to relay in an elevator to the Supreme Court Injustice

crapandemic.storenvy.com

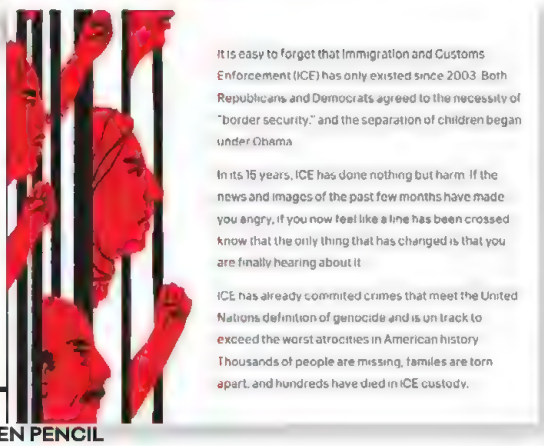

I was in ninth grade.
The reason my mom left was cuz she couldn't handle the pressure of raising such a hideous man-lady. He-she. Tranny. Faggot. Moustache girl. Rot, you gross dyke whore, rot. Fucking disgusting freak.
It's gonna be so great to cut my head off & fuck the hole in my neck. Heavy breathing. We know where you sleep. Just wait, bitch.
This is just what kids do.
What do you expect, walking around like that??
(Like what)
Being such a target.

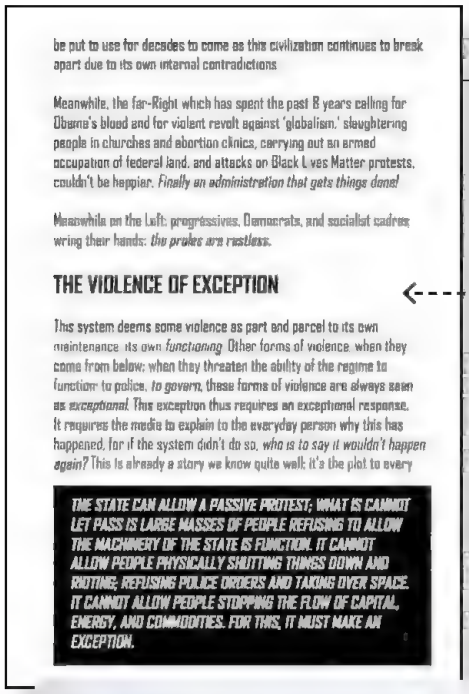
What's wrong with ICE?

BY // The Democratic Socialists of America

The Democratic Socialists of America want to remind you that even though the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has only been around for about 15 years, it's done a world of harm and should be abolished. You can print out this zine, then assemble it with some cuts and folds, then give it away. Make as many copies as you want. Spread the word about the realities of for-profit prisons that detain those arrested by ICE, the evils of capitalism, and the racist weaponization of our legal system against entire groups of people. Now in a handy-dandy palm-sized format!

dsasf.org/whats-wrong-with-ice


It is easy to forget that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has only existed since 2003. Both Republicans and Democrats agreed to the necessity of "border security," and the separation of children began under Obama.
In its 15 years, ICE has done nothing but harm. If the news and images of the past few months have made you angry, if you now feel like a line has been crossed know that the only thing that has changed is that you are finally hearing about it.
ICE has already commited crimes that meet the United Nations definition of genocide and is on track to exceed the worst atrocities in American history. Thousands of people are missing, families are torn apart, and hundreds have died in ICE custody.



be put to use for decades to come as this civilization continues to break apart due to its own internal contradictions.

Meanwhile, the far-Right which has spent the past 8 years calling for Obama's blood and for violent revolt against 'globalism,' slaughtering people in churches and abortion clinics, carrying out an armed occupation of federal land, and attacks on Black Lives Matter protests, couldn't be happier. *Finally an administration that gets things done!*

Meanwhile on the Left: progressives, Democrats, and socialist cadres wring their hands: *the proles are restless.*

THE VIOLENCE OF EXCEPTION

This system deems some violence as part and parcel to its own maintenance: its own *functioning*. Other forms of violence, when they come from below; when they threaten the ability of the regime to function to police, *to govern*, these forms of violence are always seen as *exceptional*. This exception thus requires an exceptional response. It requires the media to explain to the everyday person why this has happened, for if the system didn't do so, *who is to say it wouldn't happen again?* This is already a story we know quite well: it's the plot to every

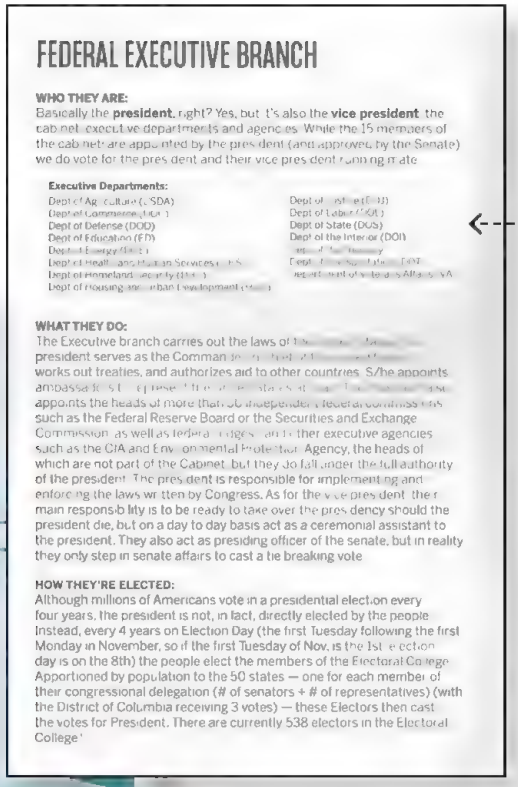
THE STATE CAN ALLOW A PASSIVE PROTEST; WHAT IS CANNOT LET PASS IS LARGE MASSES OF PEOPLE REFUSING TO ALLOW THE MACHINERY OF THE STATE IS FUNCTION. IT CANNOT ALLOW PEOPLE PHYSICALLY SHUTTING THINGS DOWN AND RIOTING; REFUSING POLICE ORDERS AND TAKING OVER SPACE. IT CANNOT ALLOW PEOPLE STOPPING THE FLOW OF CAPITAL, ENERGY, AND COMMODITIES. FOR THIS, IT MUST MAKE AN EXCEPTION.

An Anarchist Primer: For the Days of Trump & the "New Normal"

BY // It's Going Down

Sometimes voting is not enough. But how to do more than that can be difficult to figure out. This zine reminds us that we have to be in a constant state of defence: defence against the mainstream press, defence against the not-liberal-enough liberals (who will se rea radicals and anarchists out for power), defense aga nst the alt-right, defence against a government who will slap you with legal punishment — or worse — if you're a radica. or an activist. And what's more, it's essential and challenging — to fight injustice and violence without involving the police or the state. You have to be organ zed, bu d community, and develop sk ls This z.ne is your chance to get started with some helpful hints

sproutdistro.com



FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BRANCH

WHO THEY ARE:
Basically the **president**, right? Yes, but it's also the **vice president**, the cabinet, executive departments and agencies. While the 15 members of the cabinet are appointed by the president (and approved by the Senate) we do vote for the president and their vice president running mate.

Executive Departments:

Dept of Agriculture (USDA)
Dept of Commerce (DOC)
Dept of Defense (DOD)
Dept of Education (ED)
Dept of Energy (DOE)
Dept of Health and Human Services (HHS)
Dept of Homeland Security (DHS)
Dept of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
Dept of Justice (DOJ)
Dept of Labor (DOL)
Dept of State (DOS)
Dept of the Interior (DOI)
Dept of the Treasury
Dept of Transportation (DOT)
Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

WHAT THEY DO:
The Executive branch carries out the laws of the [illegible]. The president serves as the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, works out treaties, and authorizes aid to other countries. S/he appoints ambassadors to represent the United States at [illegible] and appoints the heads of more than 50 independent federal commissions such as the Federal Reserve Board or the Securities and Exchange Commission, as well as federal judges, and other executive agencies such as the CIA and Environmental Protection Agency, the heads of which are not part of the Cabinet, but they do fall under the full authority of the president. The president is responsible for implementing and enforcing the laws written by Congress. As for the vice president, their main responsibility is to be ready to take over the presidency should the president die, but on a day to day basis act as a ceremonial assistant to the president. They also act as presiding officer of the senate, but in reality they only step in senate affairs to cast a tie breaking vote.

HOW THEY'RE ELECTED:
Although millions of Americans vote in a presidential election every four years, the president is not, in fact, directly elected by the people. Instead, every 4 years on Election Day (the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November, so if the first Tuesday of Nov. is the 1st election day is on the 8th) the people elect the members of the Electoral College. Apportioned by population to the 50 states — one for each member of their congressional delegation (# of senators + # of representatives) (with the District of Columbia receiving 3 votes) — these Electors then cast the votes for President. There are currently 538 electors in the Electoral College.

Alex Arzt

[illegible]

10

11

Know Your Vote: A Workbook to Get to Know Your Elected Officials (Biff Boff Sock #9)

BY // Anna Jo Beck

We should a.ways raise our voices when we see injustice, there's no doubt about that. But we should also make sure we're well informed about our long-term civic duties, such as voting. It's equally important to make sure we're voting the unjust out of office! This zine walks you through reg'steringto vote, tells you about the levels of government, who does what in each branch, the different types of elections, and more

annajobeck.storeenvy.com or **issuu.com/annajobeck**

What Problems Can Artist Publishers Solve?

BY // Temporary Services / PrintRoom

n this zine, 17 independent artists respond to the question What social, political, economic and ecological problems are artist publishers equipped to address or solve? All sorts of answers come up: Zines fight tne mainstream narrative and promote otherwise overlooked voices. DIY culture models learning new skills instead of relying on corporations (thereby increasing community solidarity). The best art cuts down on pollution by making stuff that doesn't end up in landfills. And so on! This is definitely a defence of zines' unique ability to fight the wave of depression and anxiety that seems to be washing over, well, everything. As someone who runs a bookstore that sells these type of periodicals, and who makes zines myself, I'll add: soul enrichment is a basic need the same way food, clothing and shelter are. Without keeping our brains active, engaged, and even entertained, we leave our stories and our knowledge in the hands of powers that don't care about us. And we can't have that!

HalfLetterPress.com

HOW TO

GET AN ARTS GRANT FOR YOUR INDIE PROJECT

(IN CANADA AND OTHER PLACES)

by Hal Niedzviecki

I want you to think about getting a grant as a game of snakes and ladders. There are ups and downs, and some of them can come as a surprise. But if you keep rolling the dice, you will eventually get to the end.

Does that mean I am promising guaranteed grant success? Not at all. What I am promising is that if you keep trying, you will arrive at the finish line. But the finish line is not — and should not be — receiving a grant. The finish line is completing your project. That's the real goal, right? To write that book, draw that graphic novel, make that indie film?

Let me repeat that: *the goal is not to get a grant.* The grant is just part of the process that pushes you toward your real aim — completing your indie art endeavour.

That's been my attitude over 20-plus years of applying for grants. I've applied for and received grants for magazine publishing and marketing, for running arts festivals, and for researching and writing fiction and nonfiction books. It hasn't been easy, and it certainly didn't make me rich, but it did allow me to pursue my artistic goals and, over the years, develop a kind of grant application philosophy: the grant is just part of the process, a means to an end. If I don't get the grant, then I'll keep rolling the dice, and I'll still find some way to get to where I want to go.

So ask yourself this: Where do you want to go? If you want to go in the direction of bringing your project to fruition no matter what befalls you, then, yes, please read on. If you're thinking it would be nice to get a grant so you can bank some easy money, show off to friends, and dabble in a side project, then I'd kindly suggest that the pain of a grant application won't ultimately be worth the effort.

illustrations by sofia gutierrez

Finding grants

So where do you find grants, anyway? The answer is twofold: online, and where you live. In other words, all grants agencies are online, and there are lots of resources that list the grants available in your city, region, province, or country. Grants are usually given out based on your postal code. If you live in a city, that city will (sometimes) have a granting agency. The same goes for your province or state, and your country.

For example, because I live in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, I can apply to the Toronto Arts Council, the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts — three levels of government. Lucky me!

If you live somewhere less urban, you might not have as many options. In the US, there tend to be fewer government-funded arms lengths arts councils and they tend to have fewer programs.

But there are other places to look for grants in the U.S. and, to a lesser extent, in Canada. These are usually called foundations, and they are generally funded by private citizens and sustained through donations.

The Guggenheim Foundation is the most well known of these grant-dispensing agencies. Based in the US, they are one of the few foundations that offer grants to both US and Canadian residents. But, as they warn, the competition is fierce: "The Foundation receives approximately 3,000 applications each year. Approximately 175 Fellowships are awarded each year."

Are you eligible?

Okay, so you've searched for arts grants in [your city, province, country here]. Start assembling your list: What are you eligible for? In addition to looking at what grants are available for, say, a novel-in-progress, you also want to look carefully at *who* that grant is for. An arts grant is, essentially, money provided to an artist or organization to make art. But not all grants are the same, and one may define who they consider an artist completely differently than another.

"Hey, wait a minute," you're thinking. "Who said anything about being an artist? I'm not an artist, not yet!" You may feel that way, but everyone had to begin with that first project. If you're just getting started, then most granting agencies are going to consider you an emerging artist. They might even have special grants just for emerging artists, so you aren't competing with people who have honed their craft for decades. For instance, a granting body will have different categories for people who have not yet published, have a few pieces in a magazine or journal, or have published a great deal. Find your category and apply. You don't have to be a bona fide *artiste* (whatever that is) to apply for a grant. But you do want to carefully read the fine print and make sure that you qualify — whatever your experience level.

If you have any questions about the grant and your eligibility or which category you fit into (for example, if I'm doing a book of drawings and poetry, should I apply as a visual artist or as a writer?), then you should contact the granting agency. Most grants will list the name of a person at the particular agency or foundation who you can reach out to via phone or email. Keep in mind that they usually don't decide who gets the grant, they just organize it. You can ask them your questions without worrying that it will affect your chances. That said, do your homework first — you don't want to ask them questions that are written in bold in the grant instructions. Make sure you've read through the material provided on the website first, paying particular attention to who is eligible, what the grant funds, and what is required in your application. Then ask your questions. The staffer would much rather you check in with them first then have you spend months on a grant that is going to be rejected on a technicality.

For instance, it would be a bummer if you applied for a grant for emerging creators ages 20-25, but turns out it's only available to people who are not currently pursuing higher education, and you're in your third year of university — whoops, how did you miss that?

Timing

This should be obvious, but it bears repeating. You want to give yourself enough time to get everything together. If you find out that the upcoming deadline is next week, that's probably not going to be enough time to complete the application. Sorry. You will just have to wait until the next deadline, which may be in six months, a year or, in some rare cases, two years. It's always better to wait and make sure you are putting your best work in, than to turn in something sloppy that will almost surely be rejected.

Additionally, some grants will require you to register with their online portal and be pre-approved. You'll want to do that at least a month before the deadline, in case it takes them a while to approve you and set up your account. If you can't get approved on the portal before the grant's deadline, then you are definitely working on too short a timeline. Wait for the next deadline to come around.

The artist's statement — short and simple

The biggest mistake people make is with their artist's statement. Most grants ask for one. Sometimes they want a few hundred words, sometimes they want a few thousand. You don't have to fill the word count, and you don't have to make it sound like you are graduate school-steeped in the postmodern theories of Derrida and Kristeva. As someone who has sat on several grant juries, I know from experience what the jury wants. Keep it simple!

An artist statement should answer two — and only two — questions. Question 1: What are you trying to do? Question 2: Why are you trying to do that?

For example, I'm writing and illustrating a graphic novel based on my time working as a barista. It's about a period in my life when I had dropped out of school, ended a longish relationship, and stopped talking to my family. I'm trying to do this project because the story shows how easy it is for young people to become alienated and isolated, lost in a series of service jobs with precarious hours, disconnected from parents who grew up in a different country with very different values. I want to tell a story that's about precarious labour, intergenerational strife and being a first generation Canadian; and I also want to tell a story that's particular to me.

You see what I did there? I explained what I wanted to do, and then articulated *how what I wanted to do might matter to more than just myself.* Your project doesn't have to grapple directly with social issues. You just need to articulate the reasons why the work is about something more than just yourself or how interesting or talented you are.

Here's a tip: Make the artist statement 25% shorter than is required, and include zero artspeak jargon and use only four instances of the word "I." Do that, and the jury might actually get to the end of your statement without their eyes glazing over.

Most grants are decided by a jury, which is an assemblage of other artists tasked with picking out the best projects. They just want to know what you're actually trying to do, not how it relates to "agency" or Chomsky's linguistic theory of poststructural capitalism. If your average friend in banking, fashion, or bartending can make it through your statement and pick up on the main points, then you're probably going to be alright.

Writing an artist's statement seems like a major slog, but it can also be very useful to your process, regardless of your application's outcome. It forces you to do something you probably haven't done yet: sit down and think rigorously about what you're doing, why you're doing it and who, ultimately, you are doing it for (other than yourself). At some point, every artist must answer these questions. Most people will keep pushing it down the road, claiming "the work should stand on its own!" or "I don't need to explain myself!" Both of these statements are true, but think of it this way: the artist statement isn't for the grant's jury or the future audience of your work. It's for you: a well thought-out roadmap to guide you on your way.

The sample or support material

The other major aspect of your grant application is the sample of your work, sometimes called "support material". A granting agency isn't just going to give you money based on a statement, they want to see the goods! So they'll ask for something you've done already to read or look at, such as slides, scripts, or video clips. If you're working on a manuscript of some kind, an application might ask for as few as 10 double-spaced pages or as many as 40.

Some grant applications may give you the option of sending in work from a previous project. Unless the grant specifies that the project in question should not yet be underway, please don't do this. It will seriously lessen your chances of getting the grant, not to mention make the whole process far less useful as a motivating factor for getting you off your butt and into action. Most of the time, the jury wants to see what you're currently working on. Anything else will confuse them. They may have as many as several hundred grants to read.

And, yeah, I know — that's a lot of work! But remember what I said about using the grant application process to push your project along? If you're not willing to dig in and make some headway on your project, then you're probably not going to get a grant. The sample is a great test. If you can get the sample together, and you're happy with it, then you're probably ready to move ahead and make a concerted effort to complete a larger work.

The sample is what the jury really wants to see. A lot of jurors will skip directly to the sample without first reading the statement. The sample, after all, answers the jury's most important question: Does the applicant have the chops?

Your sample should go right up to the required length. If you are asked for 15 pages, send in 15 pages. If you're asked for 12 images, provide 12 images. You don't want anyone thinking that you don't have much to show! The sample is not a trailer, and it's not about titillation. It's about showing your skills, demonstrating that the project can be completed and is worthwhile. Give it all you've got! It's the core of your application, so the passion and commitment *has* to come through, if you are to have any hope of success.

Pro tip: Make sure all your written work is free of typos and grammatical errors. Proofread it yourself, then get a friend or even a professional to go over it. Juries with a huge stack of applications are looking for reasons to reject you. Sloppy errors in otherwise strong samples are a great excuse to bury your application.

So what do they really want?

So, you've drafted a sample and an artist's statement. You've filled out the paperwork online. You're ready to submit. Is that it? Isn't there something else? Some secret sauce, some little known recipe for success that I, master grant getter, can give you?

Well, that's the billion dollar question. What do they actually want? There are two answers to this.

The first is that the grant agency doesn't *want* anything. Their job is to fund the best projects that come through their door (aka their occasionally overcomplicated online portals). They are looking to put some dollars towards arts projects that seem likely to have an impact. So if you can show that you have what it takes, they might fund you, or they might choose someone else who has shown equal promise, all depending on the completely subjective decisions of the jury.

But the second answer is that, in some cases, granting agencies give unstated preference to certain kinds of applications or projects. Most grants agencies and foundations have some sort of agenda — which is to say, a set of values or a goal they want to fulfill that guides the kinds of grants they offer and who ultimately gets approved. An agenda isn't necessarily a good or bad thing, but it's important to acknowledge that granting agencies often have one.

Traditionally, the agenda behind the Canadian system of grant giving has been what we once might have called nation building — helping culture creators to tell stories (good or bad) about the country or the province or the city that ultimately pays the agency's bills.

IF YOU'RE NOT WILLING TO DIG IN AND MAKE SOME HEADWAY ON YOUR PROJECT, THEN YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT GOING TO GET A GRANT.

But in our fragmented age, things can be a bit more complicated. In addition to the overall goal of supporting local arts and culture creators to tell their stories, there are often different goals at play.

The agenda might be overt. For instance, the Access Copyright Grants Foundation "supports Canadian culture by providing grants intended to encourage the development and dissemination of publishable Canadian works." The key word here is "publishable." If you're working on a manuscript that is far outside mainstream publishing and that could never be conventionally published — and I hope you are! — then the grants Access Copyright offers are probably not for you. It's a clearly stated agenda, obvious to all parties.

Other agencies, particularly agencies that are directly part of the government, often have agendas of economic development. They will want you to talk about who the market will be, how many people will be employed in the making of the work, how many people might come from out of town to attend your planned event, so that at the end of the day, they can make an argument for economic stimulus.

Pro tip: Give them the information they want in the way they want it! If they want an economic argument for your project, don't send them a treatise on the power of beauty. Send them a breakdown of how each dollar they invest in you is going to lead to five dollars generated for the economy (and leave out the part about the rising up of the downtrodden cultural workers of [insert your city, region, country here].) If you can't make the argument, or don't want to make the argument, then grants with this agenda aren't for you.

Priority groups

Increasingly, grant agencies are also invested in achieving social goals through the arts. One way they do this is by supporting certain priority groups. In most cases, supporting these priority groups is meant to even the playing field for groups who have traditionally faced barriers because they belong to a particular race, disability, identity group, underserved region or economic bracket. Less frequently, you might run into a grant that privileges certain artistic themes or ideas such as multiculturalism, democratic engagement, or LGTBQ issues.

If you don't identify yourself as a member of a specified group, then it's simple: don't use this as a part of your application, and don't apply to grants aimed at those groups. If you do identify as a member of a prioritized group, then go for it. Remember that your goal is to complete your project. If announcing yourself as belonging to a priority group will push you forward, then by all means, do that.

Being a member of a priority group doesn't require that you make art about your experiences as a member of that group. Even so, I think it's helpful to think of policies to support artists from priority groups as a larger, often unstated subtext for what a grants agency wants to accomplish overall with their money. Will some funders look more kindly at proposals with certain themes, perhaps those that *overtly* explore issues around race, class and community building? I think that may very well be the case, and that's their prerogative.

So regardless of how you identify, the question now becomes: should you be trying to make work with themes that will better fit with a granting agency's unstated set of goals or values? Is that the secret recipe for success? Well, as with so many things in the murky world of cultural funding, the answers are "it depends" and "proceed with caution."

If you have elements in your work that echo themes that seem to particularly interest a granting agency or foundation, then I would definitely recommend that you emphasize those elements. Bring them to the forefront. Make sure they don't get lost. You might do this by emphasizing certain themes and plot points in your artist's statement, or by choosing sample work that really speaks to these themes.

On the other hand, do I recommend *adding* elements to your project to make it more aligned with the themes that a granting agency seems to want to encourage? Definitely not. Trying to add elements that you wouldn't normally include in your art may compromise the strength of your work. It won't be genuine, and juries and audiences will see right through it. You have to be you. You have to believe in your vision. If you don't, who will?

The big wait

So you're done. You applied for the grant. Remember, there are no take-backs. Once you've applied, you can't change your sample or add something to your statement. It's time to move on. Typically, you'll hear back in about six months, but sometimes it can be eight or even 10 months. A rookie mistake is to sit around brooding about the grant result that entire time. Try to completely forget that you applied for the grant in the first place. How do you do this? There are a few things you can and should do.

First off, apply for other grants. Pro tip: Once you've applied for one, it's a lot easier to apply for another for the same project — which, by the way, is a perfectly acceptable thing to do. In some cases, you might only have to make very small changes to the application, such as slimming down sample pages from 30 to 20. Better yet, you'll find a grant that wants *more* sample work. Great, incentive to keep going with your project!

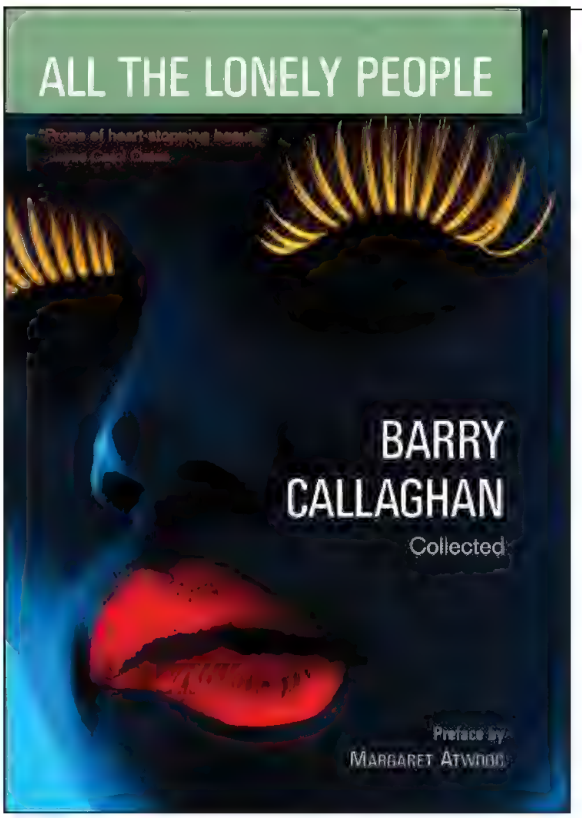
That's the key. Don't lose momentum. The grant got you started, so keep going. Make a schedule. Work on your project every day for an hour, for two hours, for three hours. Tell yourself that you want to be further along with the project when you get the results, whatever they are, than you were when you sent the grant in. Make that a measurable goal. If you need added incentive, how's this? — if you don't get the grant, then you'll be in a better place to reapply because of all the hard work you've done.

And yes, you can and should reapply (check the fine print, some agencies limit you to a certain amount of applications during a calendar year). But if you aren't successful, it's best not to reapply to the same program with the exact same project. It's true that there is an aspect of lottery-like luck in grant applications, but there's also the fact that a jury already considered your application and didn't fund it. Will another jury — similarly selected and instructed — come up with a different decision? Probably not.

So, keep working while you're waiting. If you are rejected, you will have a more fleshed out project to apply with. If you're accepted, then you head into your funded time period with momentum. Good for you.

Batten down the hatches, turn off your phone, unplug the internet and get to work!

Hal Niedzviecki is the founder and publisher of *Broken Pencil Magazine*. He's the author of many works of fiction and nonfiction including, most recently, *Trees On Mars: Our Obsession with the Future* (Seven Stories Press) and the novel *The Archaeologists* (ARP Books). Visit him at alongcametomorrow.com.



BARRY CALLAGHAN

ALL THE LONELY PEOPLE
COLLECTED STORIES

Short stories, like tiny novels you drown in, filled with people of our modern moment who find in every instance some trick of survival, that remarkable homage to human resourcefulness.

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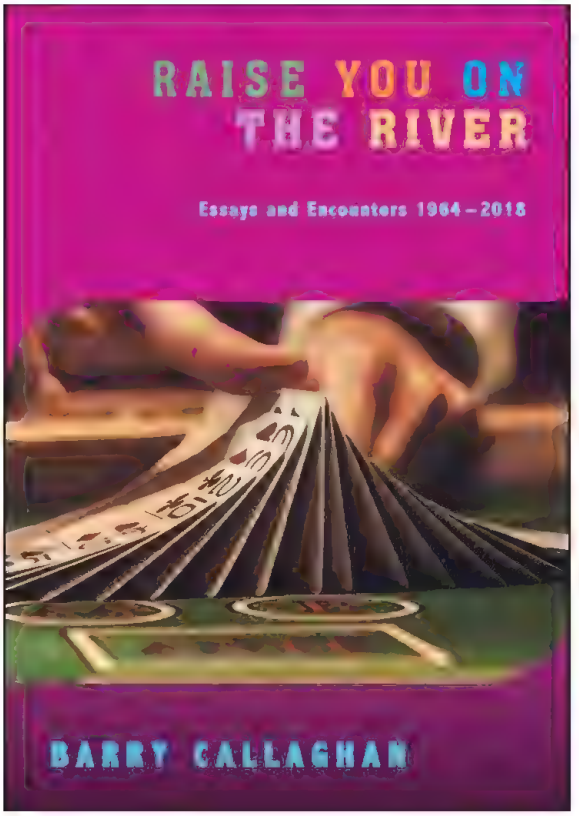
PREFACE BY MARGARET ATWOOD

Callaghan's writing is wide-ranging but often takes the perspective of a marginal individual's view of the human experience. These tales are told in a variety of voices – street hustlers, priests, blues singers, Holocaust survivors, cross-dressers, paramilitary snipers, even those we may euphemistically consider the "ordinary" – all of them authentic, and all would subscribe to the maxim that "happiness is overrated." The dialogue is true to speech as it is spoken, shot through with humour, piercing sadness and puzzling beauty.

"The final words in *All the Lonely People*, Barry Callaghan's magisterial collected short fiction, are "once upon a time." This would at first appear an odd way to end a volume of close to 500 pages, one that comprises a career-spanning overview of the author's work in this particular genre. But the invocation of an old-world fairy-tale formula tilts in the direction of memory and the past, which is appropriate for the current volume in general and the specific concerns contained in many individual stories." —*TORONTO STAR*



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For some six decades Barry Callaghan has been a singular presence in Canada. His distinctive literary style, tone and temperament reveal him to be an inquisitive observer, thoughtful commentator, and assiduous craftsman celebrated for his sharp intellect and startling imagination. Always attuned to the history of the place and in covert search of adventure, he is also a public scholar, unflinching before the harsh complexities of our time.

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Barry Callaghan, of Toronto, is the well-known novelist, poet, and man of letters who has been included in every major Canadian anthology, and his fiction and poetry have been translated into seven languages. On February 1, 2019, he will be formally inducted into the Order of Canada in recognition of his contribution to Canadian literature.

Folio highlights creators working with unexpected media and materials.
This edition is by Clara Congdon.

AMY OWEN
COURTNEY SCOTT
GERALDINE FABRIKANT FILM EDITOR THE QUEEN
BRAVE IRENE (1986) WILLIAM STEIG
THE TRANQUIL MOON
GIRL FOUND LIVING WITH MONKEYS IN INDIAN FOREST
TO SEE

By Clara Congdon

My Calendar Series Project is a living archive that chronicles my experience through small, daily artworks that ultimately get assembled into miniature quilts. I assign myself a different prompt every month, then proceed to document each day accordingly on a two-inch square of cloth or paper. At the end of the month, I sew the squares together into the shape of a calendar. For example, the prompt for April 2017 was to stitch the headline that had appeared most frequently on my phone's news app that day. The following October, it was to stitch the name of a creative professional whose work I had consumed. As time passes, these calendars remain as evidence of my evolving thoughts, experiments, projects, relationships, concerns, and observations.

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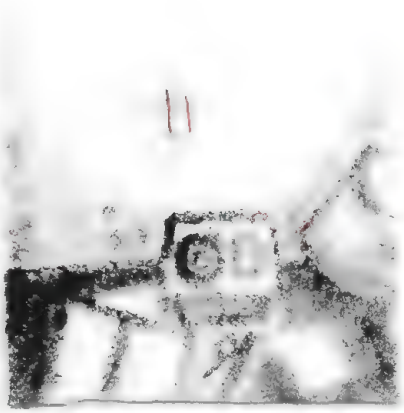
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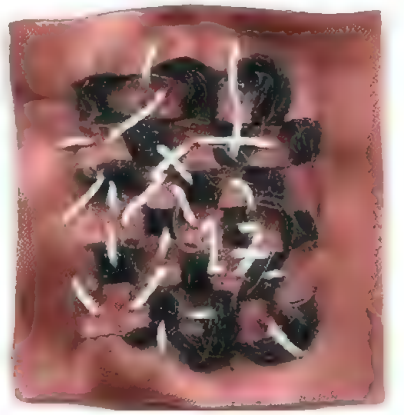
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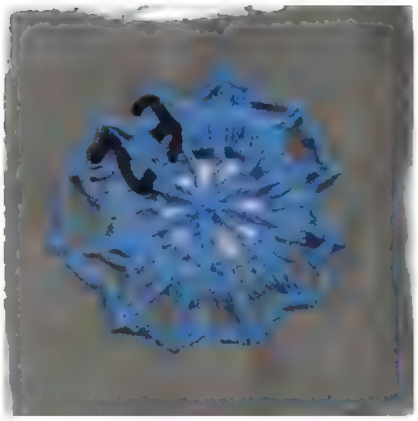
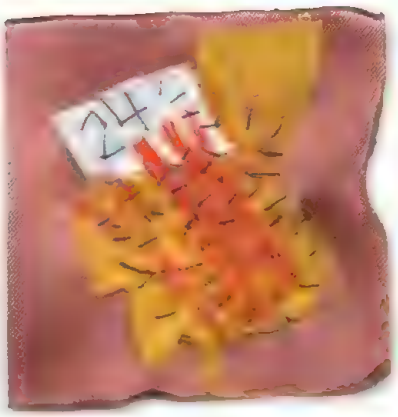
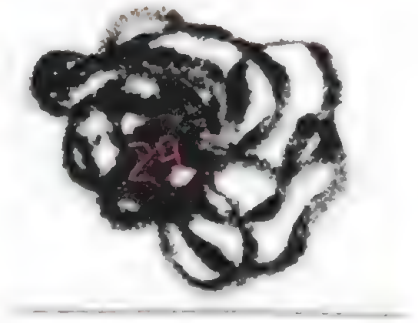






Clara Congdon is an emerging artist based in Montreal. She makes tactile drawings and artist's books exploring gender, media consumption and representation, and personal archives. Her latest artist's book, *Want to buy some illusions?,* is currently featured in *Art of the Book 2018*, a travelling exhibition of work by members of the Canadian Bookbinders and Book Artists Guild. Most recently, she launched *You Betcha Iris*, a zine profiling members of Montreal's drag community.

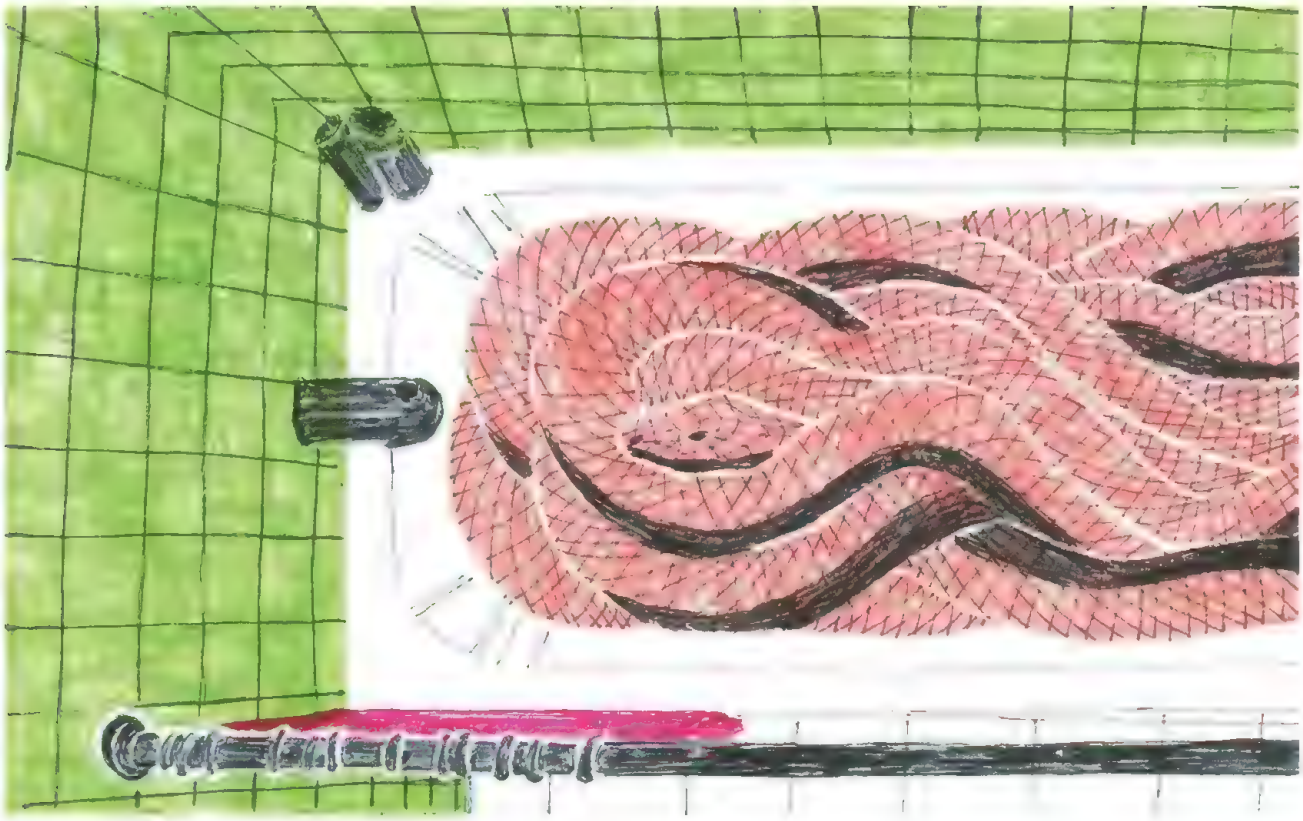


illustration by Natalie Mark

SNAKE DREAMS

by Jess Taylor

All the drains in your apartment were clogged, and your roommate was against buying Drano. "I think one of my friends owns a snake," she said, but she didn't call them, and you both spent your morning showers with water around your ankles. And when I say morning, I mean the afternoon, because it was the end of May, and everything was wrong.

Not everything, that's hyperbolic.

But too many things.

You were in the middle of a black mood that stretched a week. Your cat was having a hard time, too. You woke to her clipped meows as she tried to seduce birds through the window screen. Sometimes she'd plunge at the glass, hit it with her paw, claws retracted, walk along the ledge. Her tail flicked in frustration.

You texted your friend, who lived in a better apartment at Dundas and Dovercourt:

How does my roommate always get to work on time?

Your friend texted back:

SHE WAKES UP.

You'd accidentally smoked a cigarette on Wednesday night and had woken up feeling poisoned. There must have been a bad lime in my drink, you texted before going to the washroom and vomited. Then you fell back asleep for five more hours.

You dreamt about snakes, not the plumbing kind, but the kind most people are afraid of. Instead, their teeth and limbless bodies fascinated you. You wanted to give your snake a hug, even though you knew it couldn't hug back, and its black body turned red in the bathroom and slithered underneath your desk.

It was the end of May and everything was wrong.

The things that were wrong were stupid. Nothing even mattered. You knew you were being extreme.

The first thing was that you'd slept alone the night before. The guy you were texting had stopped texting you back.

But that was a small thing. It had nothing to do with anything. Sometimes you wondered if you even really wanted the responsibility of texting someone like that anyway. You knew it would be easier if you didn't remember the way his hair stuck up every which way when he showered, hot water melting away his hair gel. Or that time he kissed your hand in the cab.

A strange May heatwave snuck through the wall just to make you sweat. You called for your cat to cuddle you, but she paced the windowsill, watching as clouds darkened the sky. The birds were retreating. Rain began with no sound.

On the way to see your friend, the streetcar broke down where College curved into Dundas as if the streets were two sprouting necks of a beheaded hydra, or one street trying to swallow the other whole. You walked through the rain from Lansdowne. A week or two ago, you might have called your mother to complain, but not this week. You dialed your friend instead. "What a fucking week," you told her on the phone. "I'll be there soon."

"I'm getting another call. Call you back? Or just see you when you get here?"

"Fine. Whatever."

"Well, somebody's cranky. Can you see the rain where you are?"

"I'm in it. On the street."

"Just listen to it. You know that rain is beautiful."

"This is silent rain."

"That's impossible — believe me, I know a lot about the weather."

And it was making a sound, like white noise from a dryer, or the noise a child makes as they sleep, air slipping in and out of their mouth in little sighs. Somehow you forgot you'd loved the sound of rain, lying in bed, the rain making it so you wouldn't dream, wouldn't need to call your mom in where she'd lie beside you all night, rolling over only once, gently in your twin bed, to face the wall.

Rain plastered your T-shirt to your skin. Cars drove past you. People around you hopped into cabs, but no one offered to share, maybe because you kept scowling at the sidewalk.

You got there eventually, where your friend lived up fire escape stairs. Across the street, water poured off the canopy of the fruit market. "Do you think they sell less fruit when it's raining?" your friend asked you as she handed you a towel.

"I don't know!"

"Well, you should care. You should care about your local businesses."

You flopped onto your friend's living room carpet, which she'd nicknamed the Carpet of Existential Angst. You had gone to your friend's house to work — she was applying to jobs that she probably had no hope of getting, and you were supposed to be writing content for blogs. Blogs on agriculture, blogs on teaching, blogs on how to get your cat to stop ripping apart the curtains, and blogs on do you think he could possibly like me. Every blog was secretly an ad. You spent the day refreshing Facebook.

You made yourself as level as possible with the Carpet of Existential Angst. You hoped maybe she'd forget you were there and that you wouldn't need to return to your apartment, without a working sink or tub. With a roommate who still hadn't called their friend for a snake and who obviously thought she was better than you, as possibly everyone in the whole world did.

That night the snake was yellow. It lived in the toilet bowl. The toilet stopped flushing, the water rose and overflowed, dumping the snake onto the bathroom tile. It curled around the bottom of the porcelain. It began to twitch, as if convulsing. From its mouth, a small yellow head emerged. It darted towards you. "Look," you said in the dream, delighted, "a baby!"

You were starting to become a little afraid of snakes.

In the sink, you studied the formation of the bubbles in the water from brushing your teeth, little flecks of food floating on the surface. You waited. Eventually it will go down, you thought. It has to.

But the water and debris stayed for hours, even after you listened to records while lying with your face pressed to the living room futon.

"My life is gross," you said to your cat who was hiding underneath the coffee table.

You went to your friend's place again, and this time the streetcar didn't break down, which you thought was a good sign. The warm breeze came through the streetcar's open window and pulled at the scarf you'd wrapped around your body and fastened with a belt. The scarf had only cost $2.99 at a shop in Kensington, and now its true purpose was to clothe you when you couldn't bear to be clothed.

You stretched out on the Carpet, while she sat on the couch and Googled your dream. "Dreaming of a yellow snake may be a call to step forward and use your intellect to resolve a situation or issues in your waking life."

"What intellect?" You laughed.

"Is that a scarf?"

"I made it into a dress."

"I can see your bra."

"Good," you said.

It was the end of May, and everything was wrong.

She came down to join you on the Carpet, and you sat cross-legged beside each other. There was always a strange ache in your feet on days like these. Your friend touched your alert bracelet, but didn't say anything, just held your hand. A comfort in the way you were able to sit side by side, knees pressing against each other.

The second thing wrong was stupid too. It's just that you had this unpredictable chronic illness and sometimes it flared up. You were starting to get annoyed by calls from your doctor reminding you to check your blood.

Your friend's ceiling was particularly interesting that day, and you lay on your backs and chatted the rest of the time away, and then you danced while drinking red wine. You got no work done. But you'd already lost four of your blog clients that week, and who cared about the other ones. (That made three).

Before bed, your roommate said, "I could get used to this clogged bathtub thing. I like not needing to bend over to wash my feet."

"I guess," you said, but when you

brushed your teeth, you could see the pieces she'd left behind in the bathroom sink.

It was the end of May, and everything was wrong.

Your roommate hugged you before she went to bed, and you waited for the end of her shower to drain, reading for about an hour on the bathroom floor. You filled the tub and climbed on in, knowing there were pieces of both of you caught. A whispering hair was stuck to your elbow. But the water felt familiar like the smell of your mother. Part of you wanted to put your mouth to the surface and drink. You picked up your phone, leaned on the dusty bathtub ledge, coated in cat hair and dandruff. Your finger hovered over H for Home, but you called your friend instead. "Guess what I'm doing?"

"What?"

"I'm in the tub." You started laughing, and you couldn't stop for a minute, that kind of laughter that made your eyes shut and tears come out. A couple slid down your face and plunked into the bathwater, puncturing the soap grey.

"That drain still plugged up?"

"Yep. Let me tell you what's floating around me — there's some lovely brown hair, my hair, that looks like toe jam, I don't even want to know what that is."

"That's disgusting!"

"I know," you said, stepping out of the tub, wrapping yourself in a baby blue towel. "Everything is."

The snake was bigger than you. A brown boa constrictor. You still had your impulse to hug it. This snake could coil itself around you and hug and hug. Leave you suffocated by scales. You approached the snake, which reared up so you could look at each other eye to eye. You put your hands out, and instead of hugging the snake, you pulled open its jaws. You plunged your hands inside the snake's mouth, deep down into its throat, which was cool and wet. Unseen things snagged your skin, tearing it and you weren't supposed to get cut. But you reached deeper, you thought you could feel the clog, and you grabbed ahold, threaded fingers through hair and sludge and pulled. It resisted only a moment before allowing itself to be dragged back with your retracting arms. Hair and more hair came out of the snake's mouth, fell into water pooling at your feet. Where was the water coming from? It dripped down the bathroom walls, through cracks in the ceiling. The hair covered your feet and the boa's scaly body, but you didn't stop pulling until the whole of you was covered in dark hair and mold from the drain. Something in the hair was moving, all the hair was moving, the hair was little brown snakes covering your whole body. They writhed, twisted around each other as if they knew they looked identical, as if they were trying to share the same skin.

Your cat lunged at the windowpane in your bedroom. Thump. You stared at her with sleep-crusted eyes. Thump. For once, she jumped down from the ledge heavily and came up on your bed. She pushed her face into yours. Bored with the birds.

You finally got dressed, in real person clothes, shorts and a T-shirt, instead of just a scarf. The sun was hot on Roncesvalles Avenue. "How're you feeling?" you asked your mom on the phone. The week of silence slithering in the air between you. "I mean, how's your chest?"

"It's fine," she said. "I'm feeling a lot better. The doctor thinks it was just a muscle spasm."

"And your heart?"

"We're still doing tests, but he doesn't think it was my heart."

This was the fourth thing, but all the things seemed to be dissolving. You still hadn't gotten a text from that guy, but there were about three more cute people out on the street. Clients came and went, as did your focus, but you were young. You supposed you were ill and maybe that tampered with your youth, but how ill is ill? And finally the sun was out — you told your mom you loved her and hung up the phone.

You came home from the hardware store and tore two plastic snakes from their package. Black with red tips, their teeth hungry velcro hooks. The hole of the drains welcomed them. You shoved the plastic into the bathtub drain. You pushed down and down until your hand was flush with the drain's cool metal, crusted with soap scum.

That was the hardest part, the moment before pulling up, not knowing if the teeth had snagged the blockage or if you were only wasting your time, again. The mass resisted your first small tug. But then you pulled up in one swift movement. Hair and unswept away shampoo suds clung to the snake in a mass. It rested on the edge of the tub, oozing black gunk on the porcelain. Chewed off toenails and fingernails poked out of the snarl of hair, caught.

The edge of the tub was cool. When you and your roommate first moved in, it had been white, scrubbed clean by the landlord or previous tenant. Now it was grey. Your roommate never cleaned it and you never did either, out of spite. Nothing could be worse, you thought, than not cleaning out of spite.

The snake went into the drain and pulled up more hair, more gunk. Each clump your roommate's hair entwined your own, slick, hundreds of snakes trying to share the same skin. You scooped it all into your hand, ready to throw it away.

Here were little bits of you, curled and tangled in the palm of your hand.

You dumped it into the trash and rinsed the tub with boiling hot water. bp

Jess Taylor is a Toronto writer and poet. Her second collection, *Just Pervs,* will be released by Book*hug in Canada in Fall 2019. Recently, a short story from that collection, "Two Sex Addicts Fall in Love," was long-listed for the Journey Prize and included in *The Journey Prize Anthology 30*. The title story from her first collection, *Pauls* (Book*hug, 2015), "Paul," received the 2013 Gold Fiction National Magazine Award. Jess believes that collaboration and helping other writers is an important part of her writing practice and continues to organize events in the community. She is currently working on a novel, *Play*, and a continuation of her life poem, *Never Stop.*

HONG KONG FOOD FIRE STORM

Susanne Lee

Kari walked north from Julie's apartment into crowded Mongkok, a working-class neighbourhood north of Tsimshatsui. It was a warm mild Tuesday afternoon. Kari turned onto Shanghai Road, a street lined with discount electronics stores, then an alley full of clothing stalls, before she reached her favourite open-air food stand. The daipaidong was run by a sixtyish bear of a fellow. Leung Sook, Uncle Leung, as all the regulars called him, dished up bowls of steaming wontons in a rich fishy broth. He wore his usual outfit, a pristine wife beater, khaki shorts, rubber sandals and a pale doughnut-shaped jade pendant on a silver chain from his neck.

Uncle Leung flashed the thumbs-up sign at her. "Good, hah?"

Kari ordered a side dish of vegetables, and today, it meant iceberg lettuce, lightly braised and served with oyster sauce. Other customers came and ordered and he collected bills and coins from them before they sat at the folding tables. Kari plucked a pair of plastic chopsticks from a green plastic container, and he poured her some watery tea as wafting sounds of Cantonese opera came from his boombox.

"You Chinese?" He jabbed his ladle at Kari. "Daddy Chinese?"

"No, my mother."

Kari never thought much about being of mixed race in the States, especially in San Francisco. She looked more Asian than white; her nose was slightly bigger and people always said her eyes were "exotic," which she considered a somewhat silly remark. Several of her friends were mixed, Terry Thomas was Black and Vietnamese, the Johnson twins were Japanese-Italians, but here, it seemed necessary that everyone classify her, to identify who she was and determine where she was from, from Uncle Leung to the girls at Mercedes to Eva's parents.

Uncle Leung's food was hearty, the egg noodles al dente, served with a pinch of green onions in a broth so hot Kari felt the steam in her nostrils. Home-cooked food made by Uncle Leung with much pride, as he brought out each bowl and firmly placed it on the table, along with the whole notion of being comforted and cared for, came as a revelation to Kari. She missed that growing up.

Her own mother had bragged about how she never cooked. Their primary diet consisted of Mexican or Vietnamese takeout and leftovers from expensive French and Italian restaurants her mother had brought home from her dates. Being in Hong Kong made Kari think more of family than she ever did in the States.

On the street where she sat slurping her noodles, Kari watched a group of uniformed children skip down the stairs of their school a few doors down, with their satchels and backpacks, and rush to their dai pai dong, adjacent to Uncle Leung's. Girls wore plaid dresses with Maryknoll Convent school appliques, while boys had pristine white shirts and grey ties. The girls giggled, mixed with delighted squeals, as the boys teased each other throwing playful punches that often connected. They spent their allowances on fried tofu, chicken wings, squid, tripe, and fish balls, skewered onto wooden sticks, which they ate rapidly in order to catch every last drop of sauce.

"Mmmgoy!" Uncle Leung half-shouted at Kari. "Excusah me!"

Kari chuckled. He taught her a few words of Cantonese every time she came to his dai pai dong. "Mmmgoy," she repeated.

"Daw jie!" he said. "Thank you!"

"Daw jie," said Kari.

"Goodt!" Uncle Leung opened a bottle of Coke and gave it to Kari for passing the lesson.

In the morning, the monks chanted, as they paraded through the streets, tapping cymbals as people set out small homemade altars with fruit, incense — all offerings to the dead. Further down Lascar Street, off Cat Street, a man with slicked-back hair, a pressed short-sleeved blue shirt and polished loafers laid out a blue paper Mercedes, a stack of US 100 dollar bills, a paper Rolex, several paper diamond necklaces, and a replica mansion, preparing to send them to people in the afterlife. He struck a match. The paper lit quickly; its flames, vermillion and orange, singed the paper and rapidly turned it all into ash that began slowly floating skyward.

Kari looked out the window from Ryo's apartment. Ryo, who left early for an appointment, had given Kari a spare key. This gesture represented another level of intimacy that she hadn't had with any other man. She went to the refrigerator, where she knew he always kept pink grapefruit juice. Drinking juice out of a goblet, Kari watched the procession and all the small fires lighting up the neighbourhood.

Kari liked fire. God, she had set enough of them growing up. And when she wasn't setting them, she had candles lit as often as possible.

Offerings to the dead, what would she send up?

To Bonnie, the high school girl who hung herself after no one listened. She kept that a secret to the end, she left no note. It was senior year. Was it failure to get into the holy trinity of future success, Harvard/Yale/Stanford, or was it her boyfriend, whom her parents hated because Jorge wasn't Chinese, or was it that he was two-timing her?

She was that close from leaving the city, forever if she wanted. Instead, the senior class dedicated a yearbook page to her and the graduation became a sombre tribute. In death, she finally got the attention she had craved.

To Melissa, who slit her wrists in repeated attempts, either in the wrong direction or never deep enough. Finally she succeeded when she ceased the cutting and made the most extravagant attempt by throwing herself off the top of Campanile. A horrid, bloody, messy end. Every detail was devoured by every news outlet from the university paper to the local stations. The story of the Cali Golden Girl was harder to decipher.

Kari decided that if she could have them in miniaturized paper form, she would collect and send Bonnie a round-the-world plane ticket, a copy of Duras' *The Lover* and a box of See's chocolates.

The typhoons came at the end of May. From their names — Marakot, Nuri, Banyan — which intrigued her as to their origins, to being safely indoors watching and listening to the rains and wind lashing the windows, slapping the buildings, Kari had learned to love typhoons.

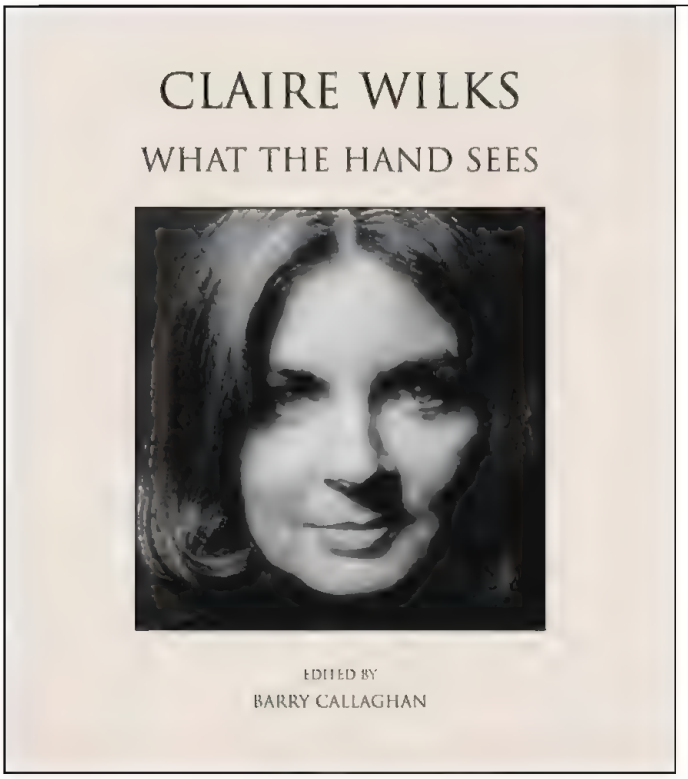
The city would shut down, as if getting ready for a deep sleep, when the announcements came blaring through loudspeakers in Cantonese and English.

Ferries stopped, as shopkeepers began shutting down, taking in electronics, fruit, clothes from the street, pulling down metal screens or boarding up windows. Awnings came down; shoppers exited from multi-storied edifices with armfuls of designer bags, or from spartan stands with thin plastic ones, beginning their escapes to buses, taxis, the last MTR.

The bolder establishments jeered at the typhoons and offered storm sales, drink and snack specials, daring those to stay out, to defy nature, to come in and consume a bit longer.

Typhoons made Kari feel human, small and mortal. bp

Susanne Lee's writing on Tiananmen dissident Ding Ziling, Spanish surrealism and sausage, menhdi in Delhi, and the Vietnamese Reunification Express has appeared in the *Village Voice, The Nation, Konch, Giant Robot* and *SLAM*. Among her short stories, "Vol de Nuit" appears in *PowWow: Short Fiction from Then to Now* (DaCapo), and "Chungking Masala" was a runner-up in the Guardian Openings Contest. After attending Harvard, she fled life as a businessgirl at the World Trade Center to write.



WHAT THE HAND SEES

CLAIRE WILKS

For most artists, the challenge is to find their voice. From the beginning, Claire had her voice. In four decades she produced a thousand brilliant works in many mediums, exhibiting around the world.

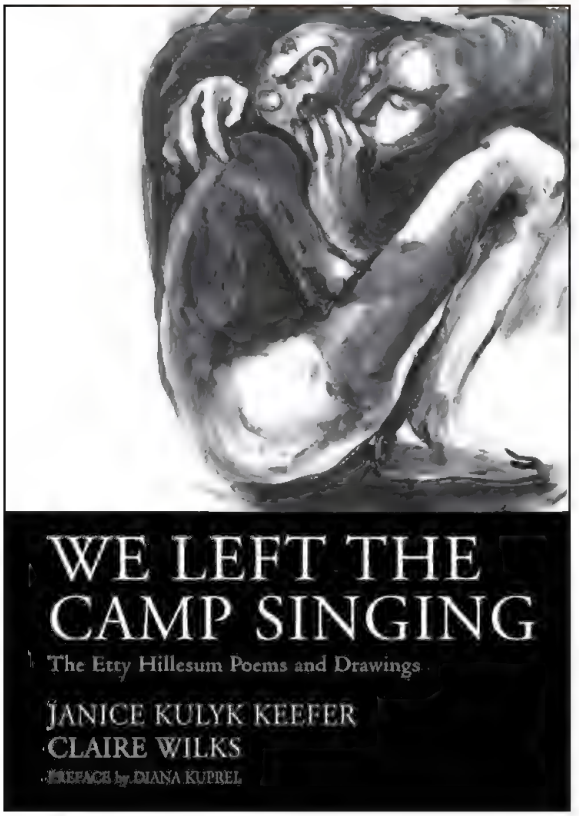
Paperback, colour 12x12 176 pages $34.95

157 COLOUR AND B&W DRAWINGS, LITHOGRAPHS, MONOPRINTS, SCULPTURES, AND PHOTOGRAPHS.

A celebration of the whole of Claire Wilks' work, and her presence in the world as a woman of great character and a singular artist. The book presents her career including appearances in Rome, Stockholm, Jerusalem, Zagreb, New York, Venice, Mexico City and, of course, her hometown, Toronto. In the company of the ample selections of her drawings, sculptures, and monoprints are commentaries, critical responses, poems, photographs, and art by many who were touched by her career and personality: Anne Michaels, John Montague, Priscila Uppal, D.M. Thomas, Timothy Findley, Mary Meigs, William Ronald, John Reeves, Nigel Dickson, Tom Sandler, Deborah Samuel, Aleksandar Tišma, Slavko Mihalić, Charles Pachter, Vera Frenkel, Gloria Vanderbilt and more.

CLAIRE WILKS

JANICE KULYK KEEFER



WE LEFT THE CAMP SINGING

THE ETTY HILLESUM POEMS AND DRAWINGS

"One must not die while still alive.
One has to live one's life to the full and to the end."

Paperback 6x9 120 pages $19.95

POETRY BY JANICE KULYK KEEFER
11 COLOUR AND B&W DRAWINGS AND MONOPRINTS BY CLAIRE WILKS
INTRODUCTION BY DIANA KUPREL

In 2018 an international congress gathered in Ghent to celebrate and discuss the work of Etty Hillesum, a woman who died at age 29 in Auschwitz.

She was a Dutch Jew who left behind deeply moving, intellectually profound diaries and letters written during the last two years of her life under Nazi occupation. We only have these works because she threw them from a train on her way to the death camp, along with a postcard on which she had written: "The Lord is my high tower. In the end, the departure came without warning… We left the camp singing… Thank you for all your kindness and care."

The Hillesum writings – translated into 67 languages – have deeply affected readers around the world, especially women. Two are Canadians: one the remarkable poet Janice Kulyk Keefer, the other a singular artist Claire Wilks. This volume, *We Left the Camp Singing*, is their visionary responses to Etty Hillesum.

ZINES

All to nah #2

Zine, Jan Stover, 48 pgs, alltonah@gmx.de, afc-fanform.de

Sports fans and zine fans don't always overlap in North America, so it's a particular treat to get my paws on a zine that effectively mushes and mashes these worlds together. The zine is called *All to nah*. It's German and it's really quite good. This edition of *All to nah* was originally created and distributed in German. It's the creation of Jan Stover, and it is primarily a fanzine for the Altona 93 football team. A Hamburg resident, Stover uses the second issue of his zine to compile "a collection of timeless articles and some 'tourist recommendations.'" You know what? It's delightful as hell. It's a dense read that dives deep into food, football, and history. Yes, it's mostly a sports thing, and a cursory knowledge of football (soccer) would probably help, but it's far from essential. To be more precise, this is more about the culture surrounding the squad than nerdy player stats and that sort of thing.

There's plenty of heart splayed on these pages, both for the team itself and Germany as a nation. Not surprisingly as a fanzine, it's all quite positive, so it's definitely a feel-good read. There are some fun bonus elements too such as a glossy pullout collecting card. This one shows a sketch of an Altona 93 player and a super fan (dressed as Superman for some reason) arm-in-arm. It's very cute, and there's a backstory that gives it more context. The zine also has some poetry and some pop culture stuff that rounds out the presentation, providing something for everyone, and a lot for a little. (Cam Gordon)

Basic Paper Airplane #12

Zine, Joshua James Amberson, 36 pgs, antiquatedfuture@gmail.com, AntiquatedFuture.com, $3 US + shipping

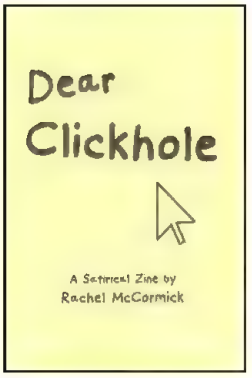
Basic Paper Airplane (*BPA*) is high quality. Strong efforts and attention to detail by its creator Joshua James Amberson result in a publication that is smart, simple, and inclusive. The 12th edition of *BPA* is subtitled "The Interview Issue." Amberson chats with authors, musicians, filmmakers and more. He presents the questions and answers in clear oral history fashion. Most of the artists profiled aren't household names, but that works to *BPA*'s advantage, as it'll force readers to focus strictly on the words and stories, rather than the celebrity or the fake stuff. *BPA* also has a nice regionalism going for it. Based in Oregon, there are little peeks at life in the Pacific Northwest here. These looks aren't steeped in coffee or grunge or technology or any other stereotypes. Instead, they are little looks at local art scenes and what they mean to the participants on a micro and macro level. Generally, the interview format has a tendency to lapse into hyperbole, with introductions and backgrounders really fluffin' things up. This doesn't happen in *Basic Paper Airplane*, and that appears to be by design. This is also consistent with the design and black and white aesthetic here. It all feels real and it's all well done. Good job, Joshua James Amberson! (Cam Gordon)

Creeper

Perzine, Rachel Fagan, readingwomenweb.wordpress.com, $3

Creeper is a perzine by Rachel Fagan that follows classic grrrl zine formatting, using a mix of cut and paste and handwriting right on the page. It's fun to see that this kind of zine is still being made and circulated. *Creeper* is a bit jumbled, there isn't an overarching theme or much continuity, but it's fun. Fagan has a section on things they do when they're sad that is fairly relatable, especially eating all-dressed chips! Whenever I'm sad, it's like a weird challenge to eat as many chip meals as possible. They also mention one of my favourite movies, *Ginger Snaps*, and do a book review for Julie Doucet's *My New York Diary* that is lovely. Oh, and there's a spell to help banish anxiety with an unfortunate disclaimer that it rarely ever works.

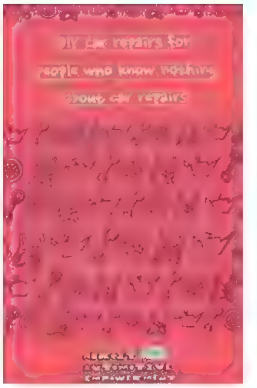
All the little bits and pieces give a fun image of who the author is and what they love. Perzines that work in this classic cut and paste style always have an aspect of roughness that feels so interesting to experience. *Creeper* is a great exploration into perzines and the simplicity that zines can have. It's casual and to the point but it isn't missing any of the zine magic. (Sidney Drmay)



Dear Clickhole

Zine, Rachel McCormick, 20 pgs, IG: @ayoitsrachelo

Like a cross between *The Beaverton* and back issues of *Frank Magazine* published between 1989 and 2004, *Dear Clickhole* is a hard copy of screenshots modeled after the kind of silly stuff you generally see floating around on social media. Part parody and part pure absurdity, the zine visits a few corners of modern culture. Here's one example: hacks of popular favourites at McDonald's. This article is super cool for people who like eating food off the floor, and have generally chaotic dining preferences. It's pretty dumb in the best ways. Another example for more seasoned (read: older) readers: *Dear Clickhole* proposes five future plotlines for (I guess) a reboot of *The Littlest Hobo*. Most of these are pretty graphic. This includes the pooch biting people and generally kicking ass, plus running for office and other bizarre activities. This goes far beyond the typical "stray dog as good Samaritan" plot lines that Canadian know and love to loathe. Somehow, these updated story arches don't seem that far-fetched (pun intended). So yeah, this whole zine is quite ridiculous and is brimming with wacky content. If the motivation was to make people laugh or draw a smirk, it's a success. (Cam Gordon)



DIY car repairs for people who know nothing about car repairs zine

Zine, Carly Clayton, 30 pgs, $15
adroitautoempowerment@gmail.com, adroitautomotiveempowerment.com

For those who have never twisted a wrench or gotten all mucky under the hood, car care can be a dicey proposition. This is in spite of the fact that saying "car care" is kinda fun and sing-songy.

Luckily, somebody named Carly Clayton has your back. Or your blind spot, as it were. *DIY car repairs* is a fun and informative guide to some automotive matters in plain language. In truth, it's pretty dissimilar from most of the items that *Broken Pencil* reviews. That's totally fine. This is because while this zine is primarily driven by utility, it also features cool drawings of things like dashboards in a slick glossy format and has all kinds of other aesthetic touches that bring this simple concept to light. I mean, there aren't too many zines that'll show you how to jack a sedan in order to change its tires, or seamlessly switch bulbs in a headlight. The language is clear and accessible. It assumes nothing, and speaks the truth without technical jargon or greasy shop talk. Truthfully, this is really 101 stuff for car owners, but in our pay-for-play world, these harder-edge soft skills are a total "huh?" for many. Distribution concept for Clayton: strike up a deal with CAA or local auto clubs to increase eyeballs on this publication. Probably the only people who might balk are those weird vulture tow trucks you see loitering around off-ramps and a few hundred sketchy YouTubers looking to jack their view counts via the same lessons in automotive empowerment. (Cam Gordon)

EXCERPT

FROM **Dear Clickhole** BY **Rachel McCormick**

How to Mentally Break Your Shitty Neighbor Gregg
The Dreaded Gregg
It's official, Gregg is the goddamn worst, I think we can all agree.
Here are some tips on how to ruin Gregg's fucking life.

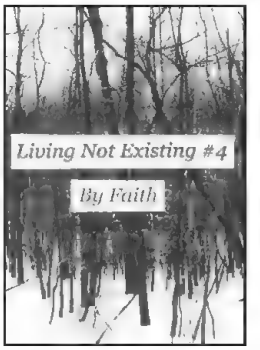
Homo Synthetica

Zine, Liesl A, 16 pgs,
lieslexp.squarespace.com

For zine readers interested in gaming or game design, this zine collects material on the process behind the video game with which it shares a name: *Homo Synthetica*. Per the author and the game's designer, Liesl A or altopunk, it is a "zine filled with anything and everything I had on my hard drive that pertained to this game."

Homo Synthetica the game sounds like a bit of a mind-bender. The player assumes the role of an android who is infected with a virus that previously has only affected humans. They're able to see the virus affecting their own thoughts and processes. The task is to decode and eliminate the virus from yourself, hacker-style. Ultimately, the game is meant to illustrate how oppressive behaviours (i.e. the virus) are learned, not originally programmed, and must be consciously eliminated.

Filled with original illustrations, character concept art and lots of nitty-gritty game design ephemera, this zine will definitely be of interest to those that have played the game, or those interested in game design generally. For me, it was an interesting, though disorienting, peek behind the game design curtain. (Joshua Barton)



Living Not Existing #4

Perzine, Faith, 24 pgs,
livingnotexisting.bigcartel.com $3

Honesty can be so very trying. In *Living Not Existing*, Faith expresses a will to be open and honest with themself and with others.

EXCERPT

FROM **A Queer Memory** BY **Noah Hurlbut**

I think its harder for my parents to understand their nonbinary child than it would be for them to understand a binary trans child. In the same sentence as she is asking me if calling me "sweetheart" is ok, my mom will misgender me. Not using my pronouns when you know better is not an option at this point, especially if you're close to me. That in itself is an act of violence against me and I will no longer take your hits, for every "she" aimed at me is a blow on my being and identity.
My mom talks about how close she wants to be with me, how she wants a relationship with her daughter,yet she won't grant me the basic form of respect which is correct pronoun use. What child would want to build a relationship with a mother who doesn't respect them enough to use the proper pronouns. I have told her too many times to refer to me using they/them pronouns, and every time I do, she tears up and starts to weep about how her daughter is gone. The next time I see her, it's like the conversation never happened, and yet again I am her daughter.
The weirdest part is that my parents will tell other people I m transitioning but will only use she/her pronouns to refer to me. They're spreading this misinformation around my old community which just makes me not want to go visit them that much more. This is just outright refusal to use they/them pronouns, and I've had enough.

reviewed on page 40

This desire is enacted in Faith's content, which is startling in its blunt, raw, and intimate vulnerability. Reading their zine is to bear witness to their will to recognize and express their truth, how they have "started to develop a deeper emotional relationship with [them]self." You can see it all spilling out onto the page and you can sense Faith's tenacity, as they try to hold themself accountable to their intentions.

There are palpable changes in the prose between the struggles and the victories. In their most confident moments, communing with the sacred, their prose flows in chain reactions, with repetitions, and revisions in their prayers, affirmations, chants, spells — call it what you will. Ritual lives in their words. Hope and intention live in their words. When Faith describes their doubts and fears, you can feel their prose quiver, but when they look toward the future, their determination is visceral and unwavering.

In a zine about growth, Faith's words are pasted over an unchanging background of bare trees. They are not idly wishing and waiting for a rebirth, but willing it into being. They are dreaming of a time when they will be new and thriving, not merely surviving like trees in the wintertime: living not existing. Like their intentions toward honesty being played out in on the page, Faith envisions a time to come, as when they describe their motivation in changing their name: "My new name is a farewell to my past self and is in honour of my self to be." I find myself repeating phrases like these to myself as reminders, wishes, honest prayers of my own. (Valley WeeDick)

A Queer Memory

Perzine, Noah Hurlbut, Little Lighthouse Press, etsy.com/shop/littlelighthouseprss, $10

At some point, queer folks become archaeologists: uncovering the past to gain clues into our present selves. Or, just as often, we're moved in the opposite direction: unearthing aspects of our identities that upend our sense of the past, our memories, and how our stories have been told to and by us. This familiar format of queer storytelling continues to be fruitful; a reminder of how the personal is always, still, political.

In *A Queer Memory*, author Noah Hurlbut interrogates what it means to be non-binary, being drawn to its lack of a legible, stable referent, and its allowance for a fluid sense of gender and self. For Hurlbut, the identity simultaneously carries the difficulty of visibility, recognition, and validation from others when, for so many people outside of queer spaces, our gender does not even exist. Over childhood photographs, Hurlbut describes the ongoing conflicts with their parents and at work, where they are expected to behave in ways that adhere to binary ideas of gender.

A tension lives on the photographs, where Hurlbut is no longer "hung up on who [they] used to be," while their parents see the same child that they want to see and that they've always seen.

A Queer Memory is bogged down in the perception of others: the expectations of family, co-workers, and people from their past. When we feel like we're disappointing or alienating everyone, there is little room to find pleasure in their shifting sense of

EXCERPT

FROM **So You're Anxious as Fuck** BY **Sonali Menezes**

- NESTING -
• this is my absolute favourite thing to do for my anxiety.
• If you have a space of your own make it yours. → for me this is my bedroom
• spend some time in it, fill it with things which make you feel safe and relaxed. This might mean cutting some pictures out of magazines and taping them on your walls or thrifting some 'new' curtains for your window
IDEAS:
- light cheap candles
- put your favourite quotes on sticky notes
- hang your favourite scarf/fabric on the walls
- print some stills from your favourite film
the idea is to have a space you feel safe + at home in while you're dealing with anxiety. To "nest" your room/space
HOUSE PLANTS
- are magical! Having a couple/a ton has helped my mental health they: remind me about the simple things + it makes me happy to see them GROW :)
20

reviewed on page 41

self. Hurlbut's zine ends with them feeling like a monster, a "destroyer of family value." Reading *A Queer Memory* is, for me, like looking in a funhouse mirror, having done my own queer archaeology. To carry on, I need to believe that there is strength, power, and joy to be found in that monstrosity. (Valley WeeDick)

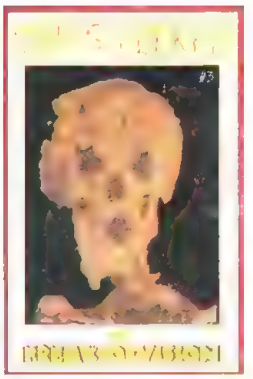
Revolution 11

Zine, Mark Kirkwood Callingham, 32 pgs, cash.is.makebelieve@gmail.com

In this zine, Mark Kirkwood Callingham details the structure, mobilization, and operation of a currency-centric new world order in *Revolution 11*. It is a near-fully developed program for "creating a publicly owned currency system that carries a code of ethics," or what Callingham calls elsewhere "money with morals." His idea, called the Project for a New Economic Century, may derive its name tongue-in-cheek from the neoconservative think tank the Project for a New American Century, known for its links to the George W. Bush administration.

As a zine-sized dive into the intricacies of Callingham's idea, the presentation is brief enough to just summarize his revolutionary scheme, but long enough to bore most people. The idea involves democratic organization and a series of intentionally inclusive party-like committees to create and operate a currency system that incentivizes good deeds instead of bad by making the latter unprofitable. Callingham does not shy away from bureaucratic detail: how committees will be composed, how they will interact, etc. The entire zine is unillustrated and plain, though there are a couple of choice quotes from the Beatles and *Star Wars: Rogue One* thrown in for style.

Honestly, though, I don't think this zine is the best vehicle for mobilizing converts. It's dry and academic, relying on logistics as its rallying cry. More power to Callingham, sure, but I don't feel like I could get excited about a wave of change that explicitly frames money as its heart and soul. Still, if he ever did pull it off, the new national anthem could be Wu-Tang's "C.R.E.A.M." without a hint of irony, and I guess that would be cool. (Joshua Barton)

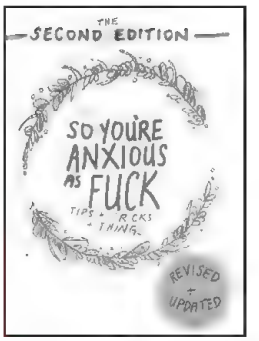


Shit's Fucked #3: FREAK-O-VISION

Zine, Josh Corea and Iggy Nicklbottum, 28 pgs, 2820 S Vermont Ave #4, Los Angeles, CA, 90007, USA, itscompleteshit@gmail.com, shitsuxpress.com, $6 US

The latest iteration of this zine from fringes of experience compiles articles, original art, and comics on freaks and freak shows. Think conjoined twinsand Ella Harper. *Shit's Fucked #3* is as intense as it is three-dimensional, because yes, it's in frickin' 3D, issued with pentagram-inscribed 3D glasses. With the mark of the beast scrawled between the red and blue lenses (so as to hover just over your third eye) you can throw these black magic spectacles on your face and watch the freaks jump off the page and down your throat.

In full colour, magazine quality pages, our hosts guide us through remarkably digestible historical summaries of the American sideshow industry and the plights and adventures of its constituent freaks. Get the down low on the Elephant Man and a fascinating (real? fictional?) story of a boy with tiger stripe scars exacting revenge on his circus persecutors. Assorted comics and illustrations round things out. The only thing I can't hang with is the disturbingly peppy profile of Dennis Rader, the BTK Strangler. (I've never understood serial killer fandom.) *Shit's Fucked #3* is a winner if you're into titillation at its extremes and exploring the edges of existence in all its contorted forms, all the way out to where our senses try to tell us something is wrong and we ought to back away. This zine is for those who ignore that warning. (Joshua Barton)



So You're Anxious as Fuck (Second Edition)

Perzine, Sonali Menezes, 32 pgs, IG: @glitteringmagpiee, $7

As someone who suffers from anxiety, developing healthy coping mechanisms and a self care routine is crucial to make it through the day. During my search for mental health resources, I have found that they often feel too clinical and impersonal for my needs. What I find so incredibly refreshing about the second edition of *So You're Anxious as Fuck* by Zine Awards Litzine Winner Sonali Menezes is how honest and homegrown it is in it's approach to creating a guide to navigating anxiety. Menezes' advice is as reassuring as it is serious, "You are complex and full of contradictions. You can love life [and] also think about suicide. Thoughts of suicide do not make you a bad person."

So You're Anxious as Fuck is aware that not all of the tips it provides are going to work for everyone. In fact, it encourages and celebrates customization of its tactics in order to better tackle individual anxieties. Menezes brings a personal touch to an impressively broad range of important topics, such as combatting anxiety-induced nausea, breathing routines to help with panic attacks, and medication (and the stigma surrounding it). These large blocks of text are written in a

seemingly effortless style and are detailed without overstaying their welcome.

So You're Anxious as Fuck visually alludes to the spirit of vintage cut and paste zines, with visible tape marks, cut out text boxes, and hand-written advice with the occasional scribbled out mistake. On top of this, a number of collages are peppered throughout the zine to break up the large sections of text information. The honesty of the written content and the DIY visuals contribute greatly to the feeling that this guide came straight from Menezes' heart and personal experiences. (Cole Degenstein)

Static Zine: Best Of

Compilation zine, edited by Jessica Lewis, Aviva Cohen, and Melody Lamb, info@staticzine.com, $3

Static Zine has occupied a special place among Canadian zinesters since 2011, and will be missed greatly at its passing. Thankfully, a final haul and "best of" issue has been released in order to commemorate its time in our cultural spotlight.

If you want to read about the editor's favourites, definitely read the damn zine. My personal favourite apexed at "La Journey," a delicious multi-course menu curated by Chef Bhairavi Thanki, making a light fare of our career journeys in the new millennia. One of Le Plats includes: "The perfect job accompanied by the highest point in your post-grad career submerged in a crippling economy, gently placed on a bed of getting-laid-off. $yourfaith." Thanki's platters offer realism mixed with optimism, and I appreciated that so much. By dessert, you will spend "$allyoursadness" in return for success that you worked through the salad, soup, and plats du jours for. That's nice.

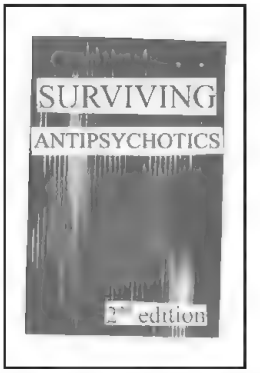
"Pulling Your Socks Up" is a gem that reflects on racism's many masks, beginning with childhood — "*Full House* style" racism — and evolving into something that lurks just under the surface throughout adulthood — that gaslighting shit. @Vimala_J works to deconstruct racism as self-preservation, and the piece speaks to this experience concisely, with full emotional force, and with a lightness that spites the weight of the content. @Vimala_J writes about the intersectional multiplication table, first as a woman, and second as a person of colour, "that gets to be four times as hard. That's really hard. That leaves very little time for napping."

This collection is an apt representation of why zine culture is so crucial to our existence. Without having our experiences mirrored in our media, it can be troubling to locate ourselves – we require points of reference. *The Best of Static Zine* offers many mirrors where the reader may find their own reflection. (Jennavieve McClelland)

EXCERPT

FROM **Trauma Castle** BY **Billy Starfield**

reviewed on page 43



Surviving Antipsychotics

Perzine, Marin Boyle, 21 pgs, etsy.com/shop/marinboyle, $2.35

This perzine by *Iambic Marrow* creator Marin Boyle has all the nostalgia I was looking for. It reminds me of the photocopied delights I grew up with in the '90s — black and white and made on the cheap. It communicates an urgent need and does so with an earnestness that charms, even if it doesn't exactly inspire. Fairly straightforward in its content, *Surviving Antipsychotics* is essentially the pharmacist booklet that many on drugs treating mental health, and in particular antipsychotics, never receive.

There are a few typos and missed apostrophes, and the tone is more clinical than I'd hoped, but as a resource for those living with mental health challenges and their allies, it's solid. More importantly, it's an honest description of what it's like to take these meds, as written by an insider and not a professional, and Boyle offers a lot of great advice. The zine starts with "Listen to your body," covering a range of side effects, from sexual dysfunction to high cholesterol, with compassion and insight. It also offers tips including apps and online tools for support. *Surviving* is an important read even if you don't have struggles with mental health in your life. My only wish is that they had given us more

insight into their emotional experience of taking antipsychotics, and less of what I think of as general medical information.

Strangely, one of the things that stayed with me longest after reading this is actually from the first page: the inclusion of a land acknowledgment that clearly states "I am a colonizer on this land" as its closing line — something rare in the realm of land acknowledgments: a clear acceptance of colonizer status and not a lukewarm attempt at reconciliation through something about sharing. Funny how sometimes it takes conversations about madness to so plainly state the truth. (Adam Barrett)

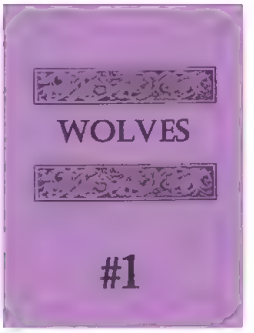
Trauma Castle #1-3

Perzines, Billy Starfield, etsy.com/shop/FantasyClub, $5 a zine

Trauma Castle is a perzine series with an amazing name, and reading it is also a touching and intense experience. The zines are incredibly personal, going deep into Billy Starfield's life, childhood and mental health. The first two issues show very difficult times for them, their struggles clear throughout. It's especially intense to see the mess that is the medical system and how it deals with mental health consumers. Starfield's experiences are, unfortunately, not unique but they are insightful. There are a lot of barriers when accessing mental health care in Canada (or anywhere for that matter) and anytime someone is able to speak to those experiences it's important to listen.

The third issue of *Trauma Castle* brings a kind of healing. It's a staggered healing, but it is healing nonetheless. It shows a rebirth and a refocusing in their life, something we all need at some point. Starfield's zines are relatable and real, especially to other trans people with mental illnesses. I could read stories from Starfield's life forever. They have a rare gift when it comes to storytelling. The little snippets of the summer they fell in love with their friend's older sister were so amazing, I would read an entire zine about that summer alone. Latchkey kids love to read about other latchkey kids!

All of this is packaged in Starfield's heavy cut-and-paste, pastel style. Using imagery that heavily contrasts with the content, there's a big focus on Lisa Frank and Kewpie doll bits and pieces all slapped together on paper with their words. Intensive collaging means the majority of each page is filled, making it a fun game to search the pages for all the little details that Starfield has hidden within. I'll be eagerly awaiting the next issue. (Sidney Drmay)



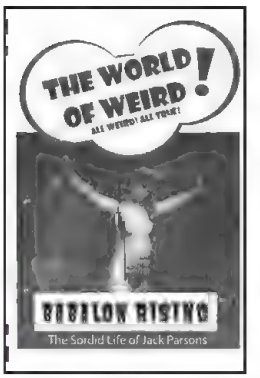
Wolves #1

Perzine, M. Paradise, Instagram @anchor_and_stars, $2

Wolves is a perzine by M. Paradise that explores family trauma and dysfunction. Paradise does an absolutely fantastic job of writing about the difficult topics of family relations, especially strained relations. *Wolves* is haunting and beautiful, even if you don't have family trauma.

Paradise tells the story of their uncle, his affect on their life, and their mother's death. It's painful and intense, a narrative that is so well-woven that you can't help but get caught up in it. It's a hard read. It's intense and raw, and you can easily feel the struggle and agitation that Paradise experienced. Family trauma is difficult. It's hard to talk about, it's hard to process, and it's hard to tell other people about. Paradise does so in a unique way, using pack mentality and wolves to explain their family's struggle with their uncle.

Generally, we know that wolves use packs to survive, that being in a pack is supposed to make life easier, and that the lone wolf thing just isn't a reality. Paradise talks about how they have to rely on their family to find kinship in the pack, even when one of the members is turning on the rest of them. It's a difficult thing to have a family member become toxic and abusive, especially in the middle of an already troubling time. Paradise recounts the experience eloquently, expressing the harm and pain so well that despite its complex content, *Wolves* is a fast read. You can't help but want to know how they moved forward with their pack, and hope that they will find safety in their pack once more. (Sidney Drmay)



The World of Weird!

Zine, Orange Ape, 28 pgs

The World of Weird! is total trash. It's also a pretty great zine and a fun read. Think of it as a halfway point between a *Ripley's Believe It Or Not* hardcover and a random VHS cassette from the *Something Weird* back catalogue. What makes *World of Weird* click is the wide range of weirdness it peddles. It includes comics, articles (true or otherwise), reviews, drawings, collages, etc. It doesn't feel very 21st century, since its aesthetic and subject matter seem very much rooted in past forms: pulp fiction (the literal stuff, not the movie), schlocky community access television, trash culture, slime, ooze, and whatnot. The best parts of *WoW* might actually be the least weird. Namely, the quickie recap of three punk films (although is *Repo Man* arguably too lauded, too dissected to be considered weird by today's standards?) and the biographies of outsider artists such as Lee Godie and Carlton Mellick III (who could arguably be squished together to form Crad Kilodney).

Again, this whole zine is quite good, and while it's not overly long, its creators do jam a ton of content into its pages. It's an efficient zine without excess calories or paperweight. (Cam Gordon)

XYZine # 1-5,

Art Zines, Kat (aka Andie Soshal), Donut Island Press, @donutislandpress, shewasavisitor.com

The note that sandwiched these five editions together introduces Donut Island Press as this writer's donut island home among the Toronto Islands. Simultaneously, Donut Island is a point of inspiration, as Kat shares that they kayaked right into the middle of the hole during the summer of 2017. Out from the grooves flooded five flipbooks that artistically reproduce the details of the storm.

The first zine contains a series of drawings of the artist's neighbours as they appear on social media. On first glance, this feels like it could be a warm gesture – our neighbours are who are missing from our films, books, news, etc. Kat instead approaches the neighbours at an absurd distance, through their digital representations — still life distilled through pixels. Noticeably, Kat's female friends are drawn with great detail, and the men look like they could be blind contour drawings. It's playtime.

Another highlight is the number of fabulous drawings women sticking their fingers inside themselves, spelling out "You Are The Only One There Is" in cut-out newspaper text. Abundant in satirical revelry, Kat is making light of the absurdity of popular culture from a safe distance. Their Donut Island home is a space of observation, and allows for a pain-free diagnosis of our cultural obsessions. "Cereal Killers," where Aileen Wuornos is the new Trix icon, and the "Zillas," where Bodzilla, Quadzilla, and Ipodzilla – among others – tear apart our cities.

If you have any interest in 20th century modern or postmodern visual art, you'll also enjoy edition 4: "5 Con artists at the peak of their careers as Artists at the peak of their careers." Donut Island is a light flip for fans of slight rips on society. (Jennavieve McClelland)

COMICS AND ART ZINES

Ancient Echo

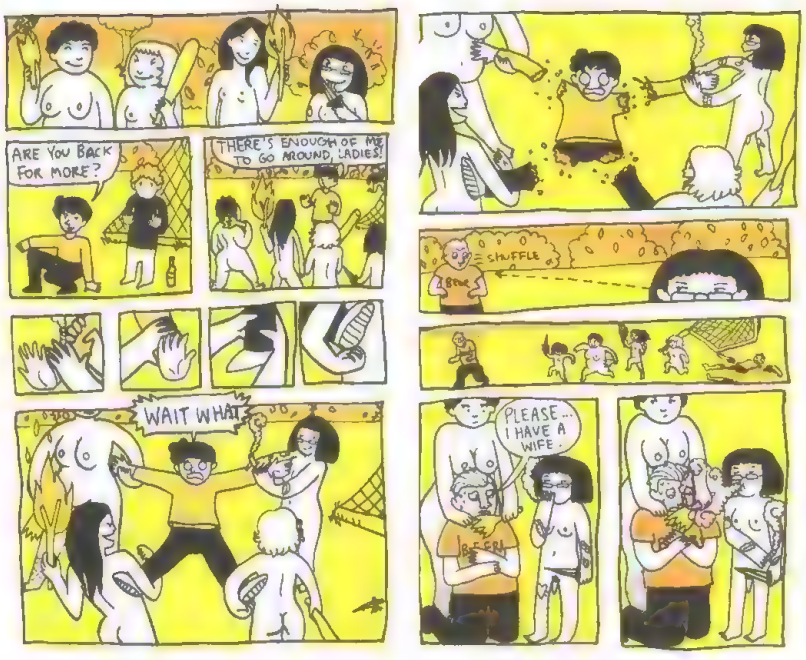
Photo zine, Ilyse Krivel, 16pgs, etsy.com/shop/ilysianfields, $12

On first read, I thought this title was a reference to a song by Mount Eerie. Technically I was wrong, (the song is "Ancient Questions"), but spiritually I was right. This ethereal, fragile series of prints by Toronto-based photographer Ilyse Krivel has the same reverence for nature and wandering dream-like tone as the songs of Phil Elverum. Aside from one rolling, stream-of-consciousness poem that spans themes both infinite and intimate, the bulk of the *Ancient Echo* is a series of hazy, disintegrating photographs. Kaleidoscopic fragments of plants, sometimes barely visible beneath the buckling film grain convey a sensuous feeling of memory made tangible.

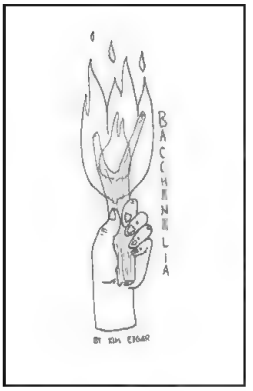
The illusion is marred by the print quality of the zine, a colour laser print on a satin card stock. The images themselves are beautifully tactile, but the printing makes them feel glassy and inaccessible. Krivel's Etsy store also lists one-off prints of the works featured in the zine. *Ancient Echo* is still a striking collection of ghostly works, but I suspect that the prints in their original form are where they really shine. (Elwyn Murray)

EXCERPT

FROM **Bacchanalia** BY **Kim Edgar**



reviewed on page 45



Bacchanalia

Comic, Kim Edgar, 32 pgs, Instagram @deadbirdparty, $20

This is an incredible comic zine that shows how little details can pull together into something beautiful. From the heavy paper stock to the gorgeous riso printing done by Colour Code, *Bacchanalia* demonstrates how to take advantage of the range of possibilities of printing and publishing. The art is beautiful, Kim Edgar's style is cohesive and cute. It feels like it has a bit of influence from French comics — simple, but incredibly impactful.

Beyond the physical aspects of this zine, Edgar has created an awesome and brutal revenge fantasy comic. *Bacchanalia* features snippets of women experiencing sexual violence in various forms, such as coercion, blatant, drunken consent and forced sex. These moments are presented starkly and in a way that feels very real, something many of us have experienced before.

Edgar doesn't let it end there though. These women band together to take down their assaulters. It's a soothing idea for anyone who has experienced sexual violence. The cartoonish violence gives the comic a more light-hearted feel that takes the violence heaviness off your mind. It's fun, satisfying and beautiful. Kim Edgar has made something truly enjoyable, but also important — it allows us to imagine and fantasize about justice and vengeance in a way that I think is important, healthy, and raw. Bacchanalia *was a finalist in Broken Pencil's Zine Awards, see page 11.* (Sidney Drmay)

Band Battle

Comic, Adam Eastburn, 36 pgs (in two cassette cases), thebandbattle.net, $12

Band Battle has a lot going on. It's about a band that "takes to the road to battle every band in epic battles of the bands," while also dealing with supernatural forces, and simultaneously being a virtual band that Eastburn makes no secret of admitting is largely inspired by Gorillaz. There's an in-character introduction from their manager (Eastburn), and the band had open auditions to recruit a new member through Instagram. It's a thematic conceit that adds a significant amount of backstory to the comic, but it's also one that, when put into

EXCERPT

FROM **Coma** BY **Angela Chung**

reviewed on page 46

practice, hampers how the comic itself is presented. This is most evident in the format: the book is split in half, each part folded to fit in its own cassette case, complete with covers and liner notes. While this is an excellent idea thematically, with it feeling like a release from the band, I found that it ultimately made the comic more difficult to read, with the resulting four-sectioned fold leaving the work unpleasantly warped.

This nitpick aside, *Band Battle* itself is a fun and fast-paced introduction to the world that Eastburn has set up. Eastburn's thin lines remind me of Patrick Crotty's recent work, with the comic never really lingering on anything too long. Likewise, the intermingling of styles helps to convey the divide between the band and its antagonists, with the more cartoonish proportioned band butting heads with the more traditionally proportioned villains. Things move quickly, and while there's not really any time spent on an in-depth introduction of the characters, Eastburn does an effective job at leaving you with a desire to know more about this band, both who they are, as well as what's next. Misgivings about the packaging aside, I'm eager to see more of *Band Battle.* (Graham Sigurdson)

Born Yesterday

Comic, Sydney Madia, 28 pgs, sydneymadia.com

In Sydney Madia's own words, "*Born Yesterday* follows the classic Greek myth of Pygmalion: the tale of the sculptor's-sculpture-turned-lover, reimagined at the scale of a dung beetle."

As such, Madia's Pygmalion, though still a sculptor, instead crafts their sculpture out of dung. This in turn is granted life from the gods to teach him a lesson, as well as make him less of "a huge dinkhole."

Perhaps in an effort to drive this home even more, *Born Yesterday* is printed on brown paper, with Madia's thick lines and stout characters greatly enhancing the humour. There's a great expressiveness to everyone in the comic, with the skateboarding housefly reporter being a standout. At times, Madia uses an actual clay sculpture to depict the object of Pyg's affection, and the contrast this image creates helps to remind the reader of the otherness of the sculpture.

Despite this lightheartedness, Madia uses *Born Yesterday* to draw attention to some toxic elements of both the original Pygmalion myth, and perhaps the art world itself. Where Ovid described the sculpture as freely marrying its creator, Madia has the artwork find love in someone else, calling out Pygmalion's "ownership" of the now sentient being for being as "a major creep." When important ideas are put forth in a more "cartoonish" manner, the intent can obscured by the presentation. *Born Yesterday* manages to not fall prey to this, and succeeds as both an excellent comic and a means to convey increasingly relevant ideas. (Graham Sigurdson)

EXCERPT

FROM **Dermis: Diary of a skinpicker** BY **Mai Vy Nguyen**

2:00
I remember staying up late just to scratch and scratch and
SCRATCH
Avoiding change-rooms so I could avoid
Whoa! What happened to you? Is that a disease?
It was easier to just say yes.

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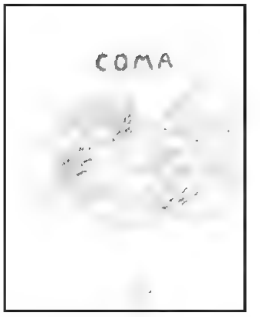


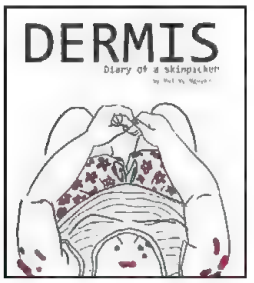
Coma

Comic, Angela Chung, 20 pgs, minijung.com

Coma is a brief comic about trying to escape from a lucid dream gone wrong. Returning to her dreams, the nameless protagonist is met by a floating dog head that asks if she's getting addicted. "Hey man," she replies, "It's fun here. I can do anything when I lucid dream. Why wouldn't I want to be here all the time?"

Of course, this question is met with an immediate answer, with her subconscious manifesting a childhood nightmare (specifically the girl from *Ringu/The Ring*) that blasts her apart, leaving her just as headless as her dog familiar. From there, it's a quick search for her limbs before announcing her intent to lay off the lucid dreaming for a while and wake up.

Chung's art effectively conveys a sense of dreaminess, with her wavy and flowing lines suggesting a constant state of motion and change. Portals in the dream move from one scene to the next, and there is a strong feeling of immateriality. Arms reach through mirrors, paper boats sail on rivers in the night sky, and a body of mist solidifies to recreate what was lost. Small panels open up into wider vistas as though they were small doors revealing impossibly large chambers within. Though brief, this brevity helps to capture the feeling of waking from a dream — that moment when reality and fiction mingle. Though the experience of a dream may be fleeting, *Coma* will stay with you. (Graham Sigurdson)



Dermis: Diary of a skinpicker

Artzine/perzine, Mai Vy Nguyen, 16 pgs, @maivi_n_, $8

The tone is immediately set in Mai Vy Nguyen's perzine on her skin picking secret. It begins with a poignant depiction of the moment her mother discovered her keloids. While Mai is changing her clothes, her mother notices her scars and, without thinking, reacts in disgust — followed by immediate realization of how harshly she came across.

The content that follows is similar in nature. *Dermis: Diary of a Skinpicker* is a confessional about a condition that is normal to Nguyen, and how alien it is to everyone else in her life. Rendered in simplistic illustrations with a restricted colour palette of black, white, and red, *Dermis: Diary of a Skinpicker* is visually striking, though stylistically inconsistent at times.

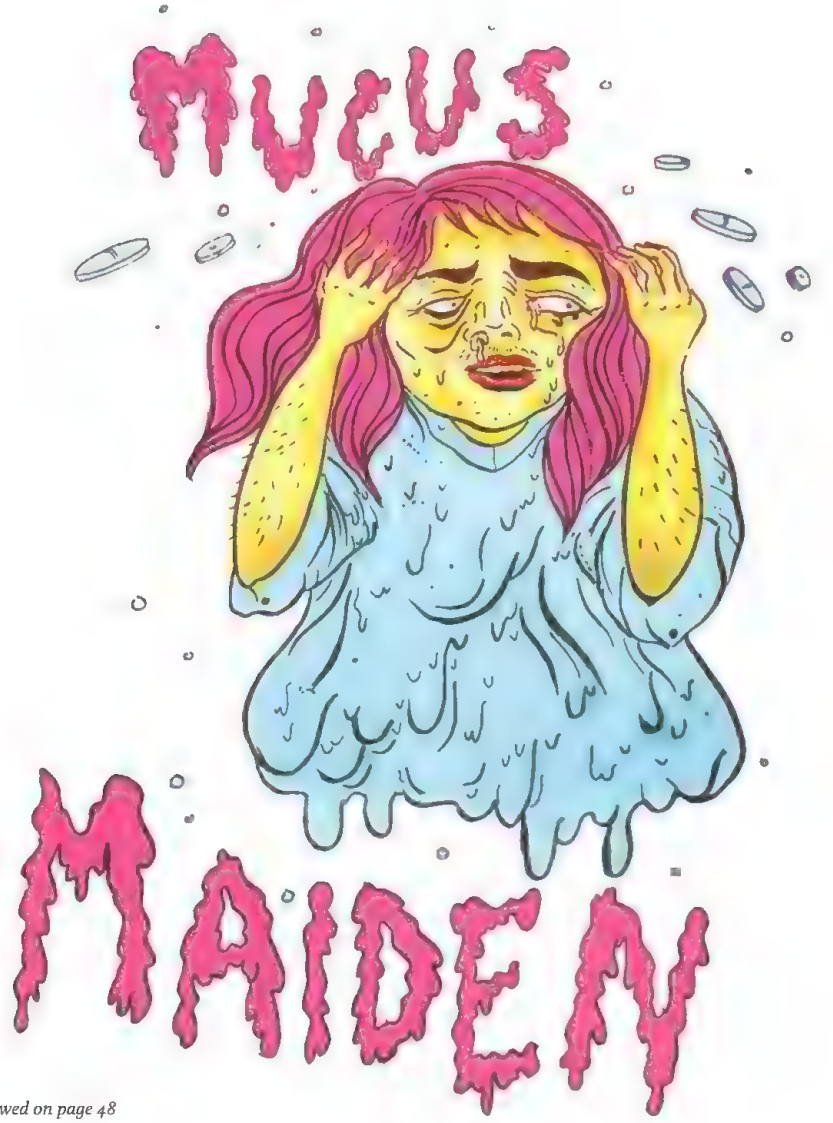
Due to the minimalist nature of Nguyen's style, areas that could use refinement don't have a lot of room to hide, and to achieve cohesiveness is far more difficult. While the majority of the illustrations are delicately composed, there are instances (such as hands suddenly not having fingers) that leave something to be desired.

Throughout *Dermis: Diary of a Skinpicker*, Nguyen depicts the experiences that come with her skin picking habit with expertly paced sequences of interaction, as well as visual metaphors to communicate inner dialogue. Nguyen handles the uncomfortable and potentially grisly subject matter with a light hand. A particularly triumphant moment in the zine is the line, "The dread of something lurking beneath. I hated every bump" visually represented by a bump under a rug.

Dermis: Diary of a Skinpicker is not without flaws, but it deserves praise for its excellent pacing and unapologetic vulnerability. (Cole Degenstein)

EXCERPT

FROM **Filthy Bitches 2.0** BY **Bo Doodley**



reviewed on page 48

Drinking to Victory

Artzine, Jonathan Bauerle, @agoodlookingdog, $7

No colour in the spectrum communicates uneasiness to me quite like a searing yellow-green; it immediately reads as nauseating, corrosive, noxious. The contents of Jonathan Bauerle's *Drinking to Victory* are printed on acid green paper and are housed between a grotesquely embellished transparency, both of which act as a warning of the absurdity that lies within.

The low-res nature of the photocopies lends to Bauerle's collages and makes their contrasting elements feel as though they're of the same universe, without stripping them of their own voice and unique grit. *Drinking to Victory* has an unsettling sense of corrosion and corruption throughout. There are clippings of elegant Victorian styled illustrations paired with torn up pornography and violent newspaper clippings, sequences of distorted mugshots paired with figures of authority that have been scratched and torn beyond recognition.

A particularly memorable sequence in *Drinking to Victory* begins with a distorted face placed above the phrase "be amputated. Happy now," among other collaged images. On the following spread the same face is enlarged and has been contorted and stretched to disturbing degrees. The final page masterfully summarizes the themes of distortion and corrosion with a simple illustration of a human head with an exposed brain. I can't help but relate to this grisly figure after losing myself in the pages of this collection of work. (Cole Degenstein)

Filthy Bitches 2.0

Artzine, Bo Doodley, bodoodley.com, $5

The cover of issue two of *Filthy Bitches* boasts that it's "even filthier." Doodley does not disappoint — the bitches within are truly filthy. The cover implies that well enough, with a woman on the toilet smoking and drinking a beer. The zine is 10 pages of full colour art depicting

EXCERPT

FROM **Helioscum #2** BY **Juli Majer**

reviewed on page 49

women being gross, dirty, or repulsive in various ways. This isn't sexy, naughty filthy — it's real filthy. Doodley shows the women doing things women do when they're alone, like taking out tampons when they get home, and farting on the couch. It's an experiment in challenging the objectifying gaze that is constantly put upon women.

The art is incredible, and the bitches relatable. It's easier to remember times that you've been filthy when you were all alone while flipping through the pages. Doodley switches between a few different media. Some pieces are done digitally, others more traditionally. Some seem to have been done with crayon, something that I can't help but relate with childhood — which is fun to think about since kids really know how to be filthy.

Filthy Bitches 2.0 is fun, funny and offers a playful look into a part of life that isn't often depicted. Usually filthiness is looked down upon, but Doodley does a wonderful job at celebrating and glorifying what it mean to be filthy, especially for women, who are often pressured to present as flawless and perfect. Doodley does a wonderful job at showing just how filthy bitches can be and does so in a fun way. We can only hope that Doodley keeps showing the world filthiness until people don't question it. (Sidney Drmay)

Helioscum #2

Comic, Juli Majer, 20 pgs, shop.ddoogg.ca, DDOOGG, $10

What do you do when an all-consuming love goes sour? Juli Majer's *Helioscum* explores having something or someone all to yourself, that all-encompassing, jealous, controlling kind of passion that is betrayed in the slightest glance, hint of affection, or, in this case, beam of sunlight in another('s) direction.

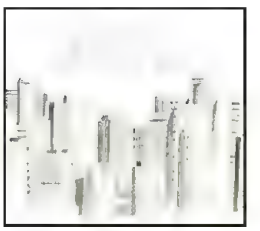
"Is the sun a whore?!" *Helioscum's* narrator demands possessively. The biggest whore in our galaxy! That star shines on *everyone*. In a fit of petulant despair, *Helioscum*'s protagonist turns fully away from the glow of the sun and, weeping, flees to the deep dark earth beneath the ground where they meet a new friend.

The story is punctuated by a photo (?) of eight mysterious worm egg marbles on the inner jacket. These jelly-like membranes — are they alive?? Please, please tell me they are not — linger in my mind while reading, following the main character from sun drunk to sun baked. Majer's yellow sunbeams are caustic and cake on the characters skin. The sinewy pinks and rusty brown tones for the comic's second half are unsettling. The comic is as much a narrative journey as it is a journey through colour. It is disgusting, but extremely fun, if you enjoy feeling queasy.

Helioscum #2 is the perfect zine to give to that one friend you have who completely vanishes into each new romance, resurfacing only to bitch about their relationship woes, and clinging desperately to you when the shit finally hits the fan and their intimate world finally, inevitably crumbles. (Valley WeeDick)

EXCERPT

FROM **Homes I Cannot Afford** BY **Nikki Papp**



Homes I Cannot Afford

Artzine, Nikki Papp, 28 pgs, myrainyweekends.com, $12

The timing is right for a zine that looks at the lack of affordable housing options in our urban centers... and does so in a cute, sorta snuggly fashion. *Homes I Cannot Afford* is a textbook high concept zine. Its jam-packed with drawings of

Vancouver-area homes, a few key details and some feisty sticker shock in the form of list prices. Nikki Papp approaches things in a fairly cerebral fashion. The high prices are referenced, but not in an aggressive or overtly angry way. The stats she provides come in three parts: list price, monthly payments, and daily payments. Again, the tone is resignation, rather than revolt in a n "it is what it is" fashion. Each home includes a tasteful drawing that gives the reader a peek at the property in question. The desire comes across, as does the reality that runs through every page of the zine. Papp is a talented artist. The drawings are gentle, tidy, and consistent. The descriptions are exact, mechanical, and precise. The whole zine works. There's purpose and flow. Papp tells a story that's essentially 50% inclusion (those who can buy house) and 50% exclusion (people who can't). Ergo, this is a story of modern symmetry that kind of sucks but also is real AF. Homes I Cannot Afford *was a finalist in Broken Pencil's Zine Awards, see page 11.* (Cam Gordon)

She Came From Above

Comic, Emily Schulert, 20 pgs, emilyschulert.wordpress.com

She Came From Above is hard to describe, and if there's a continuous narrative throughout, I've not been able to determine what it is.

This doesn't detract from what is an otherwise excellent comic, one that almost immediately reminded me of work from CF or Aidan Koch. Schulert's art, done exclusively in coloured pencils, is highly deliberate. Its figures both humanoid and plant-based are drawn with the same care and attention. There is a strong feeling of youth at play, with an immediacy to things, despite the occasionally abstract tableaus that the figures find themselves in. At times, it can feel like the text is a series of non-sequiturs, with each page being entirely unto itself. That said, the repeated appearance of a flowery figure hints at a cohesive through line to the work. The text is occasionally difficult to discern and blends into the background, yet each page remains distinct, portraits unto themselves, as much as they are pages in a narrative. Honestly, I'm at something of a loss for words for how to describe what is going on, but the feeling that *She Came From Above* evokes is one that I highly recommend seeking out. (Graham Sigurdson)

EXCERPT

FROM **She Came From Above** BY **Emily Schulert**

Stolen Ground #5: Heavy

Photo zine, Ok Cool, 40pgs, okokcool.com, $12

What does heavy mean to you? In this fifth issue of their flagship serial photo zine, Ok Cool (formerly Stolen Ground Publishing) present a varied array of responses to that question. From heavy metal and heavy petting, to heavy objects and heavy feelings, the selected photographs thread a consistent quality throughout, mostly avoiding the scattershot feeling of many submission-based collections.

Part of the zine's success comes from considered juxtapositions, mixing and matching the work of different photographers. For example, a sinking wooden house opposite a deflated bouncing castle of textured marble or a broken high-heel paired with the remains of a birthday banner reading "HAPPY." In other cases the pairings are less effective, such as several photos of live shows grouped together that create a bubble that is at odds with the overall flow. The print quality is excellent, and the generous size gives the photos enough space to shine.

It's worth mentioning that despite the name "stolen ground", suggesting some kind of comment on colonialism, the zine contains no mention of First Nations' or Indigenous cultures, though there is a land acknowledgment on Ok Cool's website. Also absent from the zine is a clear attribution system for the featured photographs. Photographers are listed alphabetically at the back, along with a corresponding page number for their work, but zine itself is unpaginated. As someone who wants to know who took these images I've fallen in love with, this feels like an oversight. Featured photographers aren't listed on the Ok Cool website either, which is weird. Despite these technical shortcomings, *Stolen Ground* is a strong collection with a smart editorial eye, more than the sum of its parts. I just wish those parts were easier to identify. (Elwyn Murray)

LITZINES AND CHAPBOOKS

Conversations with the Mute Chapter 2: Correspondences

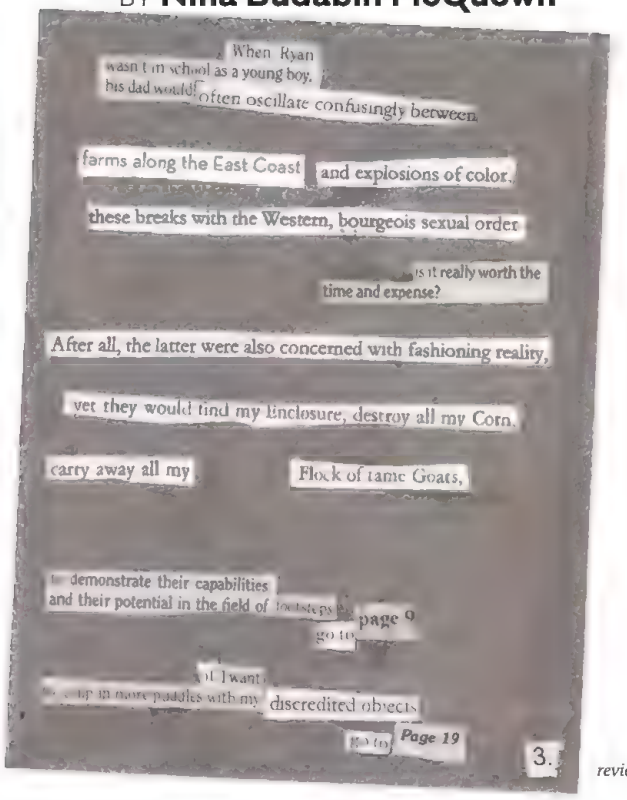
Litzine, Laura K. Watson, 16 pgs, laurakwatson.com, laurawatsonartwork@gmail.com

This collection of poetry and illustration reaches for an open-hearted relationship with the world, trying to find it in the mundane and everyday: a stowaway spider in a kitchen full of ragged, green, houseplant foliage; a tree; a vintage photograph from an antique store; and the dust settling on shelves of books. Laura K. Watson, winner of the Litzine Category of the Broken Pencil Zine Awards in 2017, creates relational dialogue between herself and just this kind of speechless company, creating connection out of deceptively normal circumstances.

Conversations with the Mute is entirely handwritten and hand-illustrated in what looks like coloured pencil, bound by thread in a burgundy craft paper cover. It is comprised of delightful pairs of handwritten conversational poetry, each with an accompanying illustration. Each pair

EXCERPT

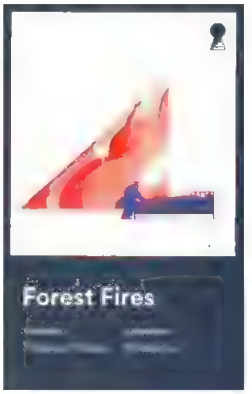
FROM **We are now an Eager Beaver!!!**
BY **Nina Budabin McQuown**


When Ryan
wasn't in school as a young boy,
his dad would often oscillate confusingly between
farms along the East Coast
and explosions of color,
these breaks with the Western, bourgeois sexual order
is it really worth the
time and expense?
After all, the latter were also concerned with fashioning reality,
yet they would find my Enclosure, destroy all my Corn,
carry away all my
Flock of tame Goats,
demonstrate their capabilities
and their potential in the field of
page 9
go to
discredited objects
Page 19
3.

reviewed on page 52

of poems represents an imaginary conversation between the author and either a creature or inanimate thing: the mundane companions that Watson talks with in rhyme. And it's fun (often funny) poetry, chatty in its delivery with quick rhymes that could be rapped over a beat. Watson addresses a tree, the tree talks back, but apparently from behind a veil that prevents any real understanding when the tree says: "I do not know you. / I do not need to. / We do not speak the same language, evidently."

Watson's poems and illustrations inspire agreement when the author writes, "I feel that everything around me is alive, interconnected and intimate." Perhaps even the zine itself, when you hold a copy in your hands. And I recommend that you do. (Joshua Barton)



Forest Fires

Essay, Margeaux Feldman, illustrated by Wenting Li, 18 pgs, The Vault, vaultzine.com, $6

"You can give this eulogy about trees," Margeaux Feldman tells herself. "He's been celebrated enough." The whole of *Forest Fires* — an essay adapted from a eulogy, on the death of Feldman's father — could be boiled down to that single passage.

Feldman dives deep into facts about tree life, community and death in this — both because it affords apt metaphors for her situation, and because it's a way of talking about her father without actually talking about her father. She doesn't avoid addressing her grief, but a cold detachment permeates much of what she writes. It's indicative of the state of mind that's required to deal with the business end of the death of a family member. She writes, "Just as the trees have turned to ash, so too has his body."

Forest Fires is an elegant treatise that likely wasn't written in the spirit of catharsis, but rather as an attempt to "reconcile the irreconcilable," as suggested by the essay's editor, Erin Klassen. "[T]he biggest surprise about grief is this," Klassen says. "It happens in the body." (Scott Bryson)

We are now an Eager Beaver!!!

Litzine, Nina Budabin McQuown, 28 pgs, yeswehaveno.com, $5

It's a sure bet that *Movin' Out* — "The Journal of the Trucking Industry" — doesn't often serve as the fodder for experimental poetry. Nina Budabin McQuown also mined *The Militant* (a Socialist newspaper) and *Robinson Crusoe* for the ranso note style, cut and paste text that fills this "Choose Your Very Own Surrealist Poetry Adventure."

The splicing together of these publications is regularly clever, though it leans toward Mad Hatter speak. Pages tend to be coherent (relatively speaking) within themselves, but it's rare that a move to a new page continues a thread from the previous. This non sequitur style is an expected facet of surrealism, but the endings to this choose-your-own-adventure trip are thus not as fulfilling as one might desire. There are five potential conclusions, but it's also possible to read yourself into a never-ending loop of passages.

Predominant themes and recurring imagery include fire, engine repair, goats, farming, bodies and body parts, time and the future. There are recurring characters as well. The way they glide in and out of the narrative, and the way they're described, is reminiscent of William Burroughs. (Scott Bryson)

You're Going to Have to Keep This Up Forever

Chapbook, Ian Martin, 16 pgs, Angel House Press, angelhousepress.com, $10

This isn't quite a documentation of a downward spiral, though it's close. It's more like a plea from someone trapped in a temporal causality loop.

Ian Martin's life (or the voice from which he writes) is built on one detrimental pattern after another, and he's either unable or unwilling to extract himself from these cycles of misery. When, in the opening poem, he repeats that "i am a good person," you get the sense he doesn't really believe it (or that he doesn't believe saying it will change anything). He's almost gleeful as he wades through the cringe-worthy details of his existence.

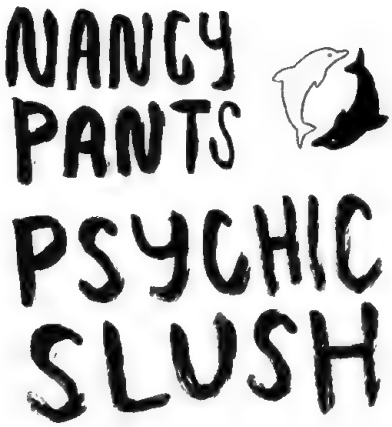
Martin is predominantly doing this to himself, but he does manage to garner some sympathy for his suffering under a barrage of societal pressures. He writes, "to spite love you have learned to live despite love, but love is there, and every day you go without love you are failing. you are a failure." Sex, relationships, death, and writing are the focal points of his insecurity. It says a lot that he finds kinship with George Jetson and the moon.

This is an unfailingly clever collection, and maybe all (or partly) in jest or an experiment. If so, Martin plays the role of malcontent well. Read this to feel better about your own life. (Scott Bryson)

Christine Fellows

Roses on the Vine
Vivat Virtute
vivatvirtute.com

There are several things you can count on finding in a Christine Fellows record: whimsy, birds, flowers, rituals, people you'd like to know. The usual suspects are all here, but they're kept in check by unexpected injections of off-kilter rhythm. Animals and nature abound, thematically, but as we've come to expect from Fellows, storytelling overshadows it all. An utterance as short as "you here in the hall / searching for the ceiling" is enough to illuminate a scene and the desires of the people in it.



Nancy Pants

Psychic Slush
Independent
nancypants.bandcamp.com

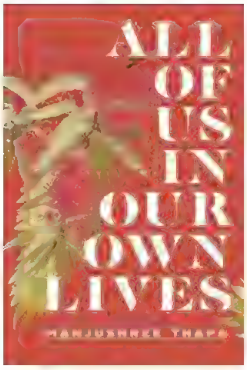
Cue the cognitive dissonance. *Psychic Slush* is undoubtedly pop music, but it hastily distances itself from the Montreal trio's semi-polished predecessor (2014's Total Nancy Pants). It's like the songs are coming from a cave, or just around a street corner. Guitar-twisting outros are common, but inventive drumming typically takes centre stage. This is the kind of album where you emerge from the other side knowing you've enjoyed yourself, even though you recall little of what just happened. Put it on repeat and you'll never get tired of it. (All reviews by Scott Bryson)

Wolf Castle

Rezurbia
Independent
realwolfcastle.bandcamp.com

What does a content rapper rap about? Wolf Castle — a.k.a. Tristan Grant of Pabineau First Nation — had to turn inward to find strife. "I feel like two people living two lives," he admits. He lives on a reserve but went to school outside of it (and completed a theatre arts degree). *Rezurbia* represents an overdue journey towards embracing his culture. It largely sticks to uncomplicated beats, with some R&B infiltration, but a highlight comes in a wacky, mold-breaking guest rap from Talon, The Rez Kid Wonder. Props, also, for including songs about Spider-Man and Star Wars.

FICTION



All of Us in Our Own Lives

Manjushree Thapa, 320 pgs, Freehand Books, freehand-books.com, $21.95

This novel begins with lawyer Ava Berriden quitting her job in Toronto. The city setting was a nice, recognizable entry point for me as a reader. However, I was quickly taken out of that comfortable place. The rest of the novel took me to Nepal, giving me a deep look at the struggles of Nepali women and men, as well as the good and bad aspects of the international aid industry.

Nepali-Canadian author Manjushree Thapa did an admirable job of shifting between four characters and connecting their stories. Ava, who was adopted from Nepal as a baby, confronts the life she could have had if she hadn't come to Canada, asking the reader to confront global privilege alongside her.

Through teenager Sapana Karki, living in her small Nepali village after her father's death, and her older brother, Gyanu, who has returned from Dubai to settle the family affairs, we experience their world — changing relationships to their home and their hopes for their futures. And alongside Indira Sharma, the reader witnesses ups and downs as she tries to become the first Nepali female director of an NGO, all while trying to keep up her role as a good wife and daughter-in-law.

It took me some time to connect with all four voices, but sticking with it was worth it, as the author's intertwining of their stories showed a variety of experiences that were all connected by Nepal itself, a country I've never visited, but felt like I could see through their eyes. (Carolyn Turgeon)

Bash Bash Revolution

Douglas Lain, 300 pgs, Night Shade Books, nightshadebooks.com, $14.99 USD

Teenage life is tough when your father is a neglectful, work-obsessed maniac. This is even more the case when he invents a sinister AI that takes over the world. That is the basic premise of *Bash Bash Revolution*, a novel told mostly in the form of social media posts made by the teen lead, Matthew Munson.

I liked this book, but I didn't *love* it. This is largely due to the exceptionally confusing timeline. The story jumps from one period in Matthew's life to another so often that it's very difficult to keep track of what's going on. I found the narrative a little slow throughout the first two thirds of the book. For the most part, readers are presented with an abundance of backstory, rather than any action that moves the present day plotline forward, and there aren't really any surprising twists, reveals, or story developments until the final third.

The tone of *Bash Bash Revolution* is quite realistic and bleak. While the themes are similar to *Ready Player One*, this is not a lighthearted adventure story featuring a plucky, hopeful hero. I enjoyed the many thought provoking ideas present in this book, including harsh critiques on society's obsession with screens as opposed to real life, and explorations of "how all our technological advances, all the ways we [are] making ourselves smarter, fitter, happier, and more productive [are] driving us insane."

I would definitely recommend *Bash Bash Revolution* to fans of video games and computers, due to the both book's overall themes and the abundance of popular gaming references throughout. However, readers without any interest in that stuff might find themselves a little bored and frustrated. (Tina Olah)

Black Star

Maureen Medved, 228 pgs, Anvil Press, anvilpress.com, $20

If you think you make bad decisions, read *Black Star*, and then get back to me.

Black Star is Medved's second novel, and it's been a long time coming. Back in 1998, Medved wrote *The Tracey Fragments*, which was adapted for screen almost a decade later. A playwright, screenwriter, and current associate professor at the University of British Columbia, Medved's work reveals the ways that academia can basically ruin your life.

Black Star follows Del Hanks, the narrator and a philosophy professor at an insignificant university. Caught between borderline obsessive concern for her manuscript and a consistent desire to set it on fire, it's been haunting her for more than a decade. The subject? What exactly makes a shitty decision. Is it even possible to avoid them? And most importantly, "the decision as catalyst for personal and professional devastation." The book needs to get published in order to seal the

deal for her tenure, but it quickly becomes evident that the painless production she craves is just not going to happen for her.

Driven nearly to madness over her past and the loathing she has for her newest colleague, Medved makes academia your worst nightmare, so don't pick it up if you're looking for a light-hearted read. With Medved's simple and short sentence prose, the text is jarring and downright anxiety inducing. Be warned, reading this story might deliver you to the horrifying conclusion that academic work is not just puzzling, but utterly purposeless.

Although I understand Medved's point in isolating the narrator and making readers feel alone alongside her, I did crave a little more amity. I mean it when I say this book is dark... there is literally no one else in this book. At some points, Medved made it extremely hard to keep picking it up when it got really suffocating. Despite this, I found that I didn't leave the novel face down for too long.

Del is a reflective narrator. At one point, she even asks herself, "Was I at least a good person? After taking a quick inventory, I had to admit that I was, in fact, a shitty person, maybe even terrible. Maybe even worse." And you'll either love her or hate her for this reflectiveness.

I had a soft spot for Del, but maybe that's because I found her strangely relatable.

That familiarity comes from the manipulations of power and imposter syndrome that she is exposed to. The concept of feeling like a fraud is thrown directly at the reader, and if you've ever experienced feeling slightly like a sham, you'll feel that same sting.

Medved purposefully disorients readers, turning the academic world (and the lives that exist within it) completely upside down. A few good lines of grim humour make the read a little more digestible, but you won't feel good about laughing.

If you like jealousy, paranoia, and really bad decisions, you'll find yourself flipping through Del's consequences at 2 am and questioning every choice you've ever made. In a good way, I think. (Leah Coppella)

The Fatness

Mark A. Rayner, 343 pgs, Monkeyjoy Press, markarayner.com, $24.99

Rayner's punchy satire depicts the modern obesity epidemic (a framing that he may take issue with) as a political ruse — one where overweight Canadians find themselves the victims when they're rounded into Calorie Reduction Centres and forced to endure a so-called "healthy lifestyle" that always seems to perpetuate the bureaucratic system that stands to benefit from their overweight status. In short, Rayner's depiction of bureaucracy exposes it as a kind of social vampire, sucking enough blood to fatten itself, but never so much that there won't be more blood tomorrow. However, this is perhaps too dramatic a summary for a novel that doesn't take itself very seriously.

Keelan Cavanaugh finds himself in one of these centres — CRC-17, or "The Girth Gulag. Chubby Choky. Plump Prison. The Fatness." When he's lucky enough to strike up a long-distance romance with Jacinda Williams, an activist lawyer performing research in his cell block, the novel quickly progresses to a prison break comedy. It has its moments, certainly, but Rayner's characters (namely, the social circle surrounding Cavanaugh) have a habit of blending into one another, forcing any punchlines that rely on their idiosyncrasies to fall flat. Additionally, his politics sometimes blur the line between comedy and commentary, such as the moment when visiting politician Andrew Sneer is revealed to be "some smirking giant baby-man intent on turning the country into some kind of Fundamentalist Christian theocracy." A little subtlety might go a long way.

In all, though, *The Fatness* is notable for its spot-on appraisal of a bureaucracy that manipulates its citizens by means of silent consent, maintaining the illusion of a moral high ground whilst benefiting economically. With such a heavy backdrop, though, Rayner's sense of humour keeps the reading light. (Joel William Vaughan)

The Gay Heritage Project

Damien Atkins, Paul Dunn, and Andrew Kushnir, 153 pgs, Playwrights Canada Press, playwrightscanada.com, $22.95

It started with a question: Is there such a thing as gay heritage? Damien Atkins, Paul Dunn, and Andrew Kushnir turned that question into a Dora-nominated play. The play premiered in 2013 at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre and came back around in 2016 with a remount and a national tour. I wasn't fortunate enough to catch the show live then, but luckily, for those of us who sometimes struggle to find an outdoor activity that merits leaving our bed, it is also now a book. And it's hard to put it down. This fast-paced, meta play manages to squish numerous history lessons into one small space. But somehow, it's never boring.

The scenes are driven by Atkins, Dunn, and Kushnir, who flip between portraying themselves and other characters or objects. Don't let this scare you if you are new to reading plays — it's pretty easy to follow. The three actors shuffle through quick scenes that are humorous and conversational, though the subject matter is not always funny. The topics range from personal coming out stories to the AIDS epidemic, the Toronto bathhouse raids of

1981 and the stories of gay people in Nazi concentration camps. It's a lot to unpack, but the darker topics are shown in a way that is digestible, engaging, and even silly.

Reading this book, I learned so much about LGBTQ history. And I realized I felt angry that I hadn't learned it before. The three actors invite us to be angry with them, but their goal is to unite. The book merges the intimate and personal with the concept of community. Issues of the past are often discussed in a conversation with someone from the present. Binding it all together is the friendship and teamwork of Atkins, Dunn, and Kushnir. Whether the question the story began with gets answered is up to the reader to decide. Heritage aside, the togetherness of the community is undeniable. (Sydney Hamilton)

Hider/Seeker

Jen Currin, 218 pgs, Anvil Press, anvilpress.com $20

Jen Currin's debut fiction collection, containing 20 stories, explores themes of reverence for the smallest things — even foul sneakers.

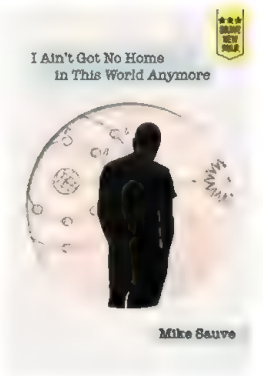
The title stories, "Hider" and "Seeker" appear at the end, so that as the reader is taken through the collection there is a sense that the characters are hiding from themselves, their anger, sexuality, or failed relationships. They seek peace in the sanctuary of cabins, spiritual books, and monasteries. (One notable recurring setting is the Kanda Monastery where a terse monk encounters and guides a few of the book's characters.)

There's an ongoing motif of the labyrinth in this collection, and it seems to be a metaphor for the entire piece, which covers recurring ground, circling themes of queerness, addiction, contemplation, visions, lizards, and ghosts. Despite the common threads through the stories, the characters are unique, and the perspectives vary from story to story.

Currin portrays a wide variety of queer relationships. One story that stands out is "Third Beach," which tells the story of two ex-wives, simply referred to as "the sexy one" and "the serious one." She reserves the reasoning for their breakup until the very end, keeping the reader in suspense as to exactly why these two people — whom the reader grows attached to despite their lack of names — didn't work out.

In "A Snake in the Grass," Currin explores the motif of female anger. An aunt in recovery seethes over what she views is her niece's mistreatment. "Shannon pictured Bethany's face laughing and she wanted to slap it. She caught herself. No. She didn't want to slap her. Maybe she wanted to grab her shoulders and shake her a little bit. Maybe tell her very clearly and emphatically that she was wrong. But not slap her."

If you are in the mood for poetic vignettes, nuanced portrayals of queerness, grief, memory, and relationships, this is a recommended read. (Fiona Raye Clarke)



I Ain't Got No Home In This World Anymore

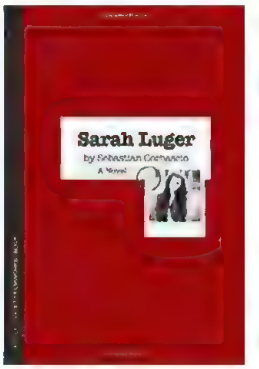
Mike Sauve, 192 pgs, Montag Press, montagpress.com, $17.95

In the press release accompanying his latest book, Mike Sauve's influences are listed as including the Saunders and Pynchon school of high literature just as much they include "*Porky's Two: The Revenge of Porky's* or whatever it was called." And honestly? That's a pretty darn good indication of the wild ride that is Sauve's *I Ain't Got No Home In This World Anymore.*

When Sam McQuiggan, the ignoble, alcoholic narrator, stumbles his way into a chance at correcting some high school era wrongs that still haunt him, he'll team up with a time traveling partner in crime to make things right. Unfortunately for Sam, though, that partner is a future version of himself, and it may turn out that two screw-ups aren't any better than one.

This novel represents Sauve's third foray into a literary world set in and around the fictional northern Ontario city of Lac-Sainte-Catherine, and although having read previous instalments may clarify certain elements of the book, I can attest that reading the other (admittedly "non-linear") L-S-C novels is not necessary to enjoy *No Home.* Sauve is a deft and comic writer, and that comic sensibility is the heart and soul of the book. Sauve's wry humour makes some of the more convoluted plot points work, and turns Sam, a character that could well have become an entirely unlikeable goon, into a compelling protagonist.

In *No Home*, Sauve has managed to create a quirky, fresh novel that functions as a kind of slapstick sci-fi. The twists and turns are unpredictable, the dialogue is witty and insightful, and the overall effect is a whole lot of fun. *No Home* is well worth picking up. (Kris Bone)



Sarah Luger

Sebastian Corbascio, 214 pgs, CreateSpace Independent Publishing, $13.99 US

Featuring pithy, staccato dialogue, a vibrant cast of offbeat characters, and a

corkscrewing plotline that keeps readers guessing, Sebastian Corbascio's debut novel is a worthy addition to the crime fiction genre. Set in the imaginary town of Fidelis, CA, the story follows two homicide detectives — the affable Tom Harper, and the stoic Charles Sariano — in their joint effort to solve the grisly murder of teen volleyball star, Sarah Luger. As the investigation builds momentum, Corbascio discloses more backstory by way of elucidating the inner thoughts and feelings of various townspeople, specifically regarding their erstwhile engagements with Sarah. I found this to be, by and large, an effective narrative device. The revolving flashbacks add a layer of psychological intrigue that increasingly ratchet up the dramatic tension, mounting, at last, to a surprising conclusion.

Wheeling into the minds of different characters provides Corbascio ample opportunity to flex his creative writing muscles. Take, for instance, his brilliant description of one character's eureka-moment: "In his mind, Peter saw the hammer of a flintlock hit its flash pan." If I had one gripe, it would be that the repeated pivots in perspective occasionally interrupted the flow of the central plot. They sometimes seemed to crop up without due warning, resulting in unnecessary confusion. That said, overall *Sarah Luger* was a fast and enjoyable read. I would recommend it to any fan of vintage hardboiled noir fiction. (Caleb De Jong)

Small Predators

Jennifer Ilse Black, 144 pgs, ARP Books, arpbooks.org, $18.95

From the beginning, Fox has known exactly how she's going to die. It's like a dark shadow that follows her around, a haunting vision that she makes no attempt to escape.

Author Jennifer Isle Black's debut novel couples this literary structure with uniquely dark prose to tell the story of a young student activist who must deal with the aftermath of a violent act carried out by one of her comrades. When Fox's friend, Mink, detonates an explosive beneath the University of Manitoba's Abbott College, Fox struggles with how to cope. You can feel the panic, the pain, and the trauma in her thoughts. She's unsure of how to come face to face with Mink's act, treading the line between forgiveness and confrontation.

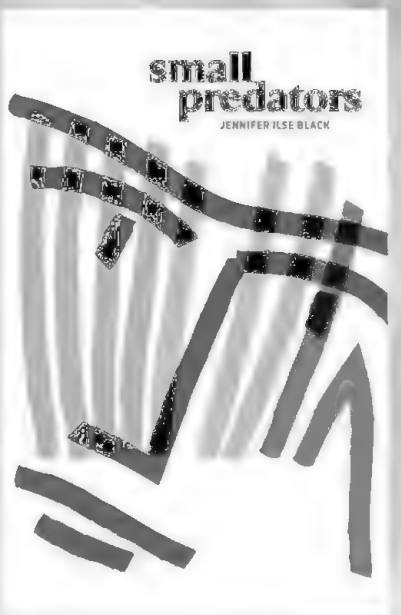
Fox' surreal narration — told through a series of lists, poetry, and structurally experimental writing — takes you on a journey through a rural university campus.

In small slivered memories and page-long monologues, Fox relives first meeting Mink, her expanding sickness — brought to the surface through self-harm — and the steps that may have driven her off the edge.

The entire collective is motivated by a drive to punch back at society's seemingly little compassion for our dying world. The collective's outrage is the foundation for their identities and is what makes it so difficult for them to come to terms with Mink's actions.

A master of descriptive imagery and pathetic fallacy, Isle Black takes the reader into every nook and cranny of Fox's mind, leaving no stone unturned in this heavy, but insightful page-turner. (Ramisha Farooq)

The Millennial activist's handbook for the total destruction of self and others—featuring a few words on forgiveness.



Jennifer Ilse Black's vibrant debut novel combines prose, lists, poetry, and structural experimentation to tell the story of a collective of student activists as they cope with the fallout of a violent politcal demonstration carried out by a member of their collective. Fox and her friends are Millennial's born into the era of climate anxiety. Struggling to imagine a resistence that isn't futile, they turn violently on themselves and each other, creating sites of political action.

arpbooks.org

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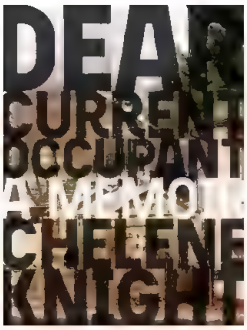
POLITICS | CULTURE | ACTIVISM

NON-FICTION



Dear Current Occupant

*Chelene Knight, 132 pgs, Book*hug, bookthug.ca, $20*

Despite featuring 23 full-colour photographs of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, *Dear Current Occupant* is neither a treatise on the author's childhood neighbourhood nor a message to its residents. However, what the book does accomplish, is probably more impressive. Through personal essays, lyric poems, and poignant fragments of short prose, Knight remembers her fraught childhood into a powerful narrative of Black female self-invention, setting a strong example for anyone caught in histories of struggle.

Progressing rapidly from early memories through adolescence and adulthood, *Dear Current Occupant* is punctuated by vivid recollections of extreme poverty, Knight's mother's drug use and sex work, and the single-parent family's frequent eviction and resettlement. What really gives these moments life is Knight's emphasis on material detail: "That slow orange light with dusty pink — some would call it rose, or maybe the 'colour that comes before the bleeding starts.'" Also remarkable are the book's candid depictions of Black women's experience, such as the emphasis "good hair" or the way in which "everyone saw me from the outside in."

One of *Dear Current Occupant*'s open questions is its generalizability, either to the Black experience represented by these tropes or to the Downtown Eastside's diverse inhabitants. While the book's framing material invokes key issues in societal race relations — the lack of Black gatekeepers at the beginning, and systemic racism in CanLit at the end — the main text doesn't answer these questions on a societal scale. Far from pushing her personal experience onto a wider social world, Knight's writing animates an intensely private mythology that gives her life meaning for herself.

Nonetheless, Knight is fully justified in situating her work within a strong tradition of politically conscious Black women's writing. Virtuosic and inspirational, *Dear Current Occupant* exemplifies writing's ability to effect meaningful personal change. (John Nyman)

NEW TITLES
ANVIL PRESS
info@anvilpress.com | www.anvilpress.com

HIDER/SEEKER
Jen Currin

The stories in Jen Currin's debut collection, ***Hider/Seeker***, deal with addiction and meditation, relationships and almost-relationships, solitude and sexuality.

"As a writer, Currin suggests a certain kind of knowing: she understands the aspirations for peace, freedom, and unburdening and yet fully senses the difficulty of attaining any of them."
— *Toronto Star*

$20 | 218 pgs. | 978-1-77214-117-7 | Stories

BLACK STAR
Maureen Medved

Maureen Medved's new novel, ***Black Star***, is a searing critique of sexual exploitation, manipulation, and the subtle machinations of power that play through the lens of academia.

"*Black Star* powerfully captures the overriding atmosphere of dread that defines much of academic institutional culture, tying it to the anxiety and paranoia that come from feeling that neither your employment nor your expertise is on solid ground."
— *Quill & Quire*

$20 | 232 pgs. | 978-1-77214-112-2 | Novel

Everyone Rides the Bus in a City of Losers

Jason Freure, 105 pgs, ECW Press/a misFit book, ecwpress.com, $18.95

In the interests of full disclosure, I was inclined to love this book before even having a peek inside. I would probably read a phonebook and find the natural poetry within, if it bore the misFit book imprint. That's just how highly I regard the brand Michael Holmes oversees. And the title of this one, well, I think is brilliant.

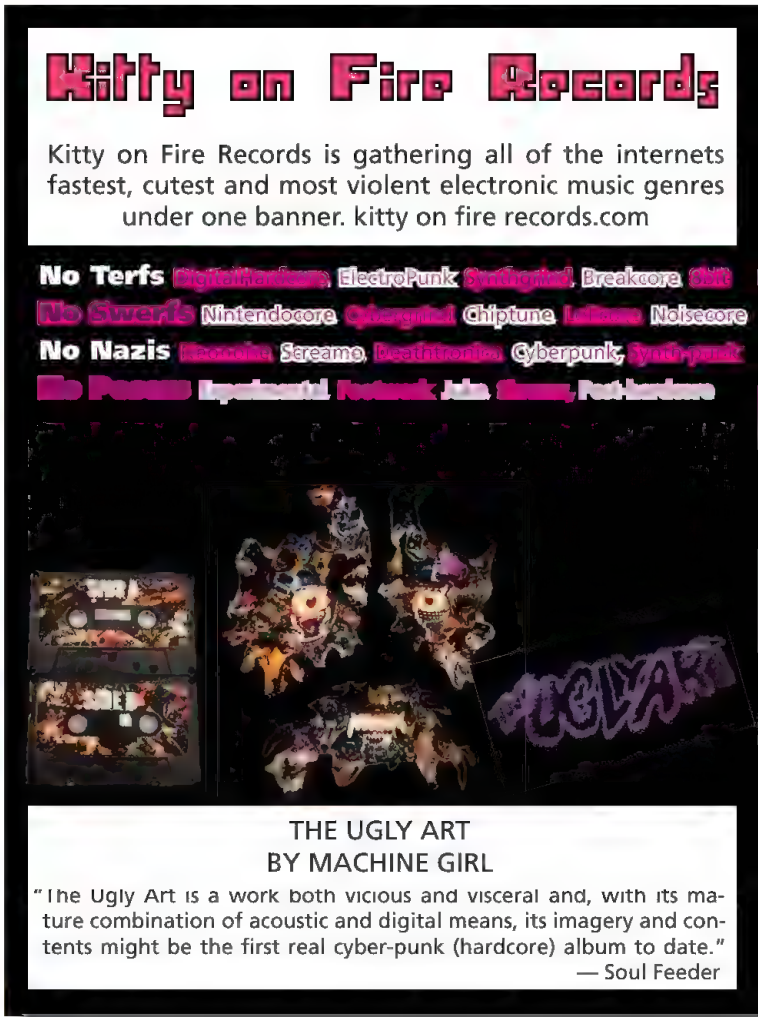
Jason Freure's work was new to me, and I would certainly look for more of it. Imagine Allen Ginsberg, with fewer cocks and shorter sentences, holding forth on the Berri UQAM subway platform, and you have a flavour for Freure's subject and approach in this book. In place of ratchetting boxcars and the machinery of night, you get the clatter of roller luggage, drunk girls in gladiator sandals and "the things that I know now that I'm not young enough to know everything." However, the tone is more sardonic than orgasmic. His go-to locations are Le Cagibi vegetarian café and the Ultramar rather than a California supermarket.

Freure incantations are breathless, urban and gritty. His poems take you from Mile End to Verdun, which you learn is "only the edge" of nowhere (rather than the middle). It is an homage to the city of Montreal writ large. You don't need to love Montreal to love the book, but it might help. And what kind soulless wretch doesn't love Montreal, or want to love it better? (Rob Thomas)

Millennials and the Moments That Made Us

Shaun Scott, 344 pgs, Zero Books, zero-books.net, $25.95 USD

Despite cloyingly imposing the epithet of "millennial" on every athlete, celebrity, and Nickelodeon cartoon character born after 1981, Seattle-based writer and millennial Shaun Scott's cultural study of

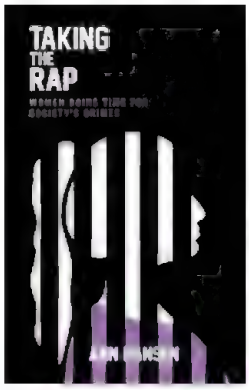

Kitty on Fire Records
Kitty on Fire Records is gathering all of the internets fastest, cutest and most violent electronic music genres under one banner. kitty on fire records.com
No Terfs
No Swerfs
No Nazis
THE UGLY ART
BY MACHINE GIRL
"The Ugly Art is a work both vicious and visceral and, with its mature combination of acoustic and digital means, its imagery and contents might be the first real cyber-punk (hardcore) album to date."
— Soul Feeder

this much lambasted generation is really an indictment of neoliberal capitalism. Scott writes that he "repeatedly found the most harmless, innocent-seeming cultural artifacts, and showed how they were actually instruments of capitalist domination," and readers should expect nothing less from his whirlwind tour of Hollywood blockbusters, professional sports dynasties, and headline news from the last four decades.

Tracking his subjects' ideological maturation from birth to adulthood, Scott's cultural memory disproportionately centres on the oldest cohort of millennials (those born in the early to mid-1980s). However, this isn't the most significant factor narrowing the scope of his probably too ambitious project. *Millennials* repeatedly returns to the claim that Reagan-era neoliberal economics eroded the generous wages and ample social security of mid-century "golden age" capitalism, leaving in its wake the most disprivileged generation of free-born Americans ever. While initially compelling, this central argument dominates Scott's thinking, and his otherwise diverse readings of cultural texts seem to always return (sometimes convincingly, but often ham-fistedly) to this one fundamental point.

At its worst, *Millennials* is both repetitive and disorganized, flitting through loosely connected cultural touchstones while saying nothing new. Some of these problems are smoothed out in the latter half of the book, which incorporates more balanced and occasionally insightful analysis. This is especially true of Scott's discussion of superstar basketballer LeBron James, who, in Scott's persuasive reading, epitomizes both the worst inheritances and the greatest hopes of American millennials.

Still, novel insights like these are too few, too infrequent, and too fragmentary to make up for the book's shortcomings, and readers thirsty for a cohesive look at the world's youngest adult generation will likely be left wanting. (John Nyman)



Taking the Rap

Ann Hansen, 368 pgs, Between the Lines (BTL) Books, btlbooks.com, $29.95

Written by a former member of the guerrilla group dubbed the Squamish Five, this memoir recounts Ann Hansen's more than 30 years in prison and parole, where she encountered and witnessed the injustices faced by imprisoned women, particularly those who are poor, racialized, and Indigenous.

Hansen intersperses her experience in

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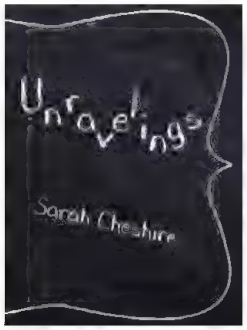
the Canadian prison system with facts about the country's prison history. The injustices she mentions were so enlightening that it opened up an entirely other world I knew nothing about, and admittedly was not passionate about, and turned me into a believer. Am I surprised that there's injustice in prisons? No. But reading it from someone who has lived it and seen it makes it that much more powerful.

The picture she paints of prison life is vivid. Sometimes it felt like I was there, and I could imagine the tensions, stress and the frustration of the prisoners. All I could do was shake my head at all the abuse and unfairness happening.

The highlight of the memoir was definitely Hansen's personal recollections. But sometimes the facts and history, despite being informative and eye-opening, hindered the flow of the book.

If you're passionate about prisoner's rights or want to know more about incarcerated women in Canada, take a look. It's not a pretty picture. (Jana Gregorio)



Unravelings

Sarah Cheshire, 64 pgs, Etchings Press, etchings.uindy.edu, $10

In light of the changes our society is going through, stories of negative and damaging relationships are becoming more common. Using power to lure women, even though they may initially seem willing, is a move that should never be played. We see this happening in Sarah Cheshire's memoir, *Unravelings*.

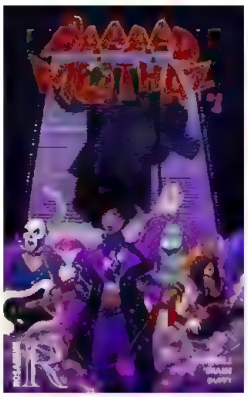
The story follows the author during her senior year in university, and the tricky relationship that had been developing with her professor. Through her eyes, we see how a once innocent student-teacher relationship becomes something infinitely more complicated and toxic. She writes, "He is pressed against me. We are pressed together. I know I shouldn't be there, but there is something thrilling about how the boundary between us is growing murkier and murkier."

As a university student myself, I feel for Cheshire in so many ways. While I have never intimately engaged with a professor, I can only imagine the stress and confusion she must have gone through. My own relationships can feel overwhelming most days, so I find her brave to have undergone this and come out the other side.

The story is composed of Cheshire's narrative, along with screenshots of emails, texts, and pieces of Title IX's investigation into the matter. While I appreciate the so-called evidence the author offers, I found it hard to read at certain points. The swift change of point of view and choppy transitions were not ideal. Despite this, the actual story was compelling.

She expressed the unheard thoughts that many go through when someone hurts us: "I didn't want to punish him. To punish him would be to punish myself." While I didn't always agree with her sentiments at times, perhaps I would have thought the same if it were me. (Ari Cannarozzo)

COMICS



Baaaad Muthaz #1

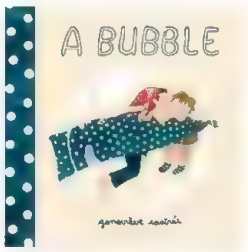
Bill Campbell and David Brame, 26 pgs, Rosarium Press, rosariumpublishing.com, $5

What if Han Solo had been played by Pam Grier? What if the crew of the Starship Enterprise had been a James Brown cover band? If you've never asked yourself these questions, you should — or, you could just let the *Baaaad Muthaz*, a new series from writer Bill Campbell and illustrator David Brame, answer them for you.

The first issue wastes no time in jumping into the action: after wrapping up a band rehearsal (specifically a cover of "Sex Machine," naturally), the outlaw crew of the HBS — Hyperbolicsyllabicsesquedalymistic a.k.a. the titular Baaaad Muthaz — are attempting to complete an illegal exchange with a group of smugglers. All is going according to plan until the party is crashed by a group of attackers led by the nefarious Captain Sky. Readers will wish the second issue was already available as they are introduced to the diverse cast of characters and given a tantalizing tease of Captain Afro Desia's mysterious past that ends all too soon.

Right from Page 1, *Baaaad Muthaz* gives off a fun and endearing vibe. Brame's artwork evokes some of the frenetic playfulness of Jim Mahfood, and is expertly coloured with a retro palette that riffs on the 1970s funk vibe. Campbell's writing, meanwhile, expertly blends sci-fi and blaxploitation tropes to create a fresh new story with a tongue-in-cheek sense of humour. (Think something along the lines of Kagan McLeod's *Infinite Kung Fu*, but in space.)

Baaad Muthaz #1 offers readers an intriguing new take on classic themes, and the story promises to get deeper and funkier from here on in. Save yourself catching up later — hop on board now! (Kris Bone)



A Bubble

Geneviève Castrée, 16 pgs, Drawn & Quarterly, drawnandquarterly.com, $14.95

The late Geneviève Castrée was a multi-talented artist, who made beguiling minimalist music under the name Ô

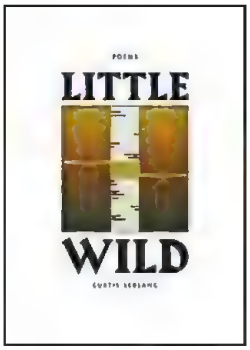
PAON and published a number of graphic novels, most notably the acclaimed *Susceptible* (2013, Drawn & Quarterly). She caricatured herself with extremely pale skin, lit by a scattered blush of freckles framing her cheekbones, and this contrast provides the abiding sense I get from her output: it's lonely, snowy cabin work, yet a vital warmth glows through it.

A Bubble is a cardboard picture book intended for small children. Its story is told from the perspective of a young girl whose mother (Castrée herself) lives inside a bubble that prevents her from leaving the house. As the simple tale progresses, there are visual hints that the bubble represents a serious illness, but the story cuts off before the situation can be clearly resolved. "She didn't get to finish," a brief endnote from Castrée's husband, musician Phil Elverum (Mount Eerie, The Microphones) explains.

It's difficult to evaluate *A Bubble* independent of Castrée's passing at age 35 from pancreatic cancer, especially given its incomplete state. Its greatest value to kids could come as an opportunity for parents to discuss its incompleteness, and in so doing safely broach the matter of death; Castrée's love for her child is apparent on every page, and it may prove a comfort to other children as well as her own.

The greater portion of the audience, such as it is, will likely prove to be adult admirers of her previous work. Castrée is truly a master of texture. You can almost feel the fabric of each character's clothes, corduroy and flannel and wool. If, as Elverum suggests, the book was intended to tether her in some way to the world, it follows that the fine details of this final work should be among her most vivid and tactile.

For readers of the raw childhood memoir *Susceptible*, *A Bubble* will feel particularly bittersweet. Having learned how difficult Castrée's own upbringing was, it's heartening to catch a glimpse of the sweetness of the life she built for herself in the short time she was allowed. It is this, and how richly these drawings capture the small intimacies of motherhood, which will linger on after the sorrow has faded. (JM Francheteau)



Little Wild

Curtis Leblanc, 80 pgs, Nightwood Editions, nightwoodeditions.com, $18.95

Curtis Leblanc, a West Coast poet and editor — Vancouver by way of St. Albert, Alberta — has released a poetry collection about life in the Prairies — warts and all. It is not a new theme: the exploration of rural life, the hardships that happen only in these seemingly forgotten areas of the country, whose existence we city people measure by how much pain is inflicted upon them and then shown in the nightly news.

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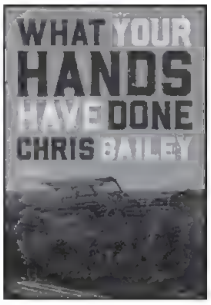

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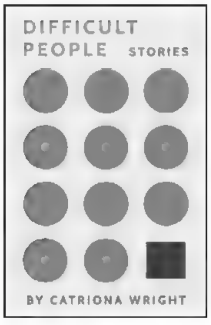

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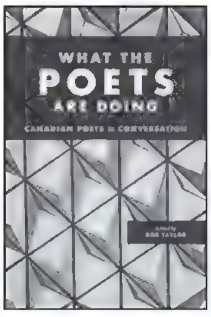

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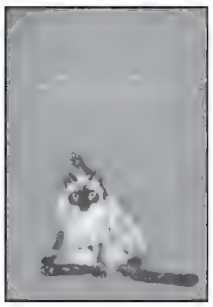

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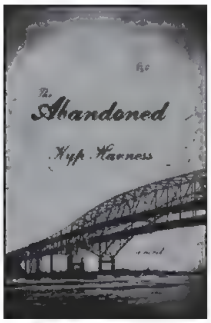

TAKE THE TORCH
A Political Memoir
by Ian Waddell
$22.95

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Leblanc eschews a feeling of already-known information, and gives us a first-person, "I was a part of it too" account. He discusses addiction, adolescent troubles, beers, joints and later, painkillers. He tells the stories of the jobs that provide early sustenance, but which become the chain that binds people to a life of hardship only softened by the ever presence of drugs and booze. It's heartbreaking. Yet, these stories do not impel any change — they just show how life can be sometimes.

He writes in an effective, Wordsworthian — though I'm sure he wouldn't want such a label — free verse and form that makes this a very prosaic form of poetry. And most of *Little Wild*'s three section are written in this highly personal, first-person form. The middle section, called "Bucky," presents an interview between the poet and his grandfather that offers a more subtle look at life in the Prairies. The 10 subsections discuss Kelly Buchberger, a former captain of the Edmonton Oilers.

In lines like "that fire happened / he was twelve / got his leg burnt / that day / he never wore / socks again / I heard he wore/ barefeet in his skates...," we see the sort of conversation you could imagine the Leblancs having around the kitchen table. This dialectic, impersonal and yet revelatory in its look at hockey culture middle-section and the bond it provides makes this excellent collection all the better.

Leblanc provides social commentary, hilarious scenes and a compassionate tone in his collection's stories about Prairie life. (Clayton Tomlinson)

Love that Bunch

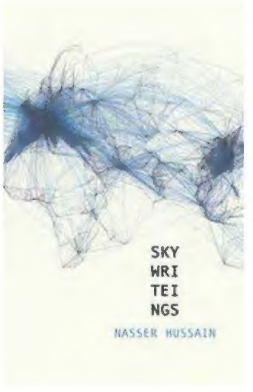
Aline Kominsky-Crumb, 211 pgs, Drawn & Quarterly, $32.95

Love that Bunch is uncomfortable to read. It's uncomfortable to look at, and at times I doubted if I could continue. Though every time I pushed through I was happy I did.

This biography scales a lifetime, from Aline Kominsky-Crumb's exaggerated tales of herself as an infant, all the way to a present-day grandmother, she leaves no stone unturned. This graphic novel takes the reader down the winding roads, dark caves and magical forests of a woman coming-of-age. With grit and playfulness we see a young, boy-crazed girl finding herself in unwanted sexual situations; we see two parents trying their best to make their family seem as wealthy and as normal as possible; we see a young woman find her confidence to leave an abusive relationship; and we see two artists fall in love.

Kominsky-Crumb has not even a speck of shame as her stories show graphic sex, abusive behaviours, drugs, love, family, death and everything in between. When I mentioned this book made me uncomfortable, I was uncomfortable when faced with the garish honesty and forced to admit that this is real life, and these stories are so many of our stories. While most want to show their life with a filter, *Love that Bunch* shows you the real shit you have also lived through, it makes you confront everything that is ugly about you, everything that is ugly about her, and with that, in the end, it leaves you, the reader, more human. The dose of reality that slaps the reader across the face is the slap that we all need. As we get sucked deeper into our screens, it's important and needed to allow someone like Aline Kominsky-Crumb to wake us up and remind us how ugly the world really is. (Shelby Monita)

POETRY



SKY WRI TEI NGS

Nasser Hussain, 97 pgs, Coach House Books, chbooks.com, $19.95

Every now and then, the light from the setting sun will catch some jet's contrail and transform something mundane and disconnected into something resplendent. That's a little like what Nasser Hussain is able to achieve with this book.

I launched into his poetry collection with high hopes and low expectations. How else do you approach a work built around the intriguing, yet extreme, constraint of using only three-letter airport identification codes as raw material for whole poems? The result is dazzling. and not just because your expectations of what he might be able to achieve are low.

Hussain gathers up these abstract and orphaned character clusters, assigns them meaning, gives them place, then breaks them up and assembles the fragments anew. Along the way, visual collaborator Matthew Stephenson maps the real-world trajectory of the poems through their airport code nexus points Indiana Jones style and the reader can play along thanks to a digital airport code map available on Coach House's website.

No part of the book is spared the constraints of Hussain's aerobatic gamesmanship. Even the title page, dedication, and acknowledgments are each rendered in airport code. From there he constructs a series of elaborate nexus points that play on language, encoding, boxing, palindromes, narration, and other flights of fancy. As one would expect of a work that takes airports, transitions, and dislocations as its points of departure. It really is even better than you imagine it might be. Really. (Rob Thomas)

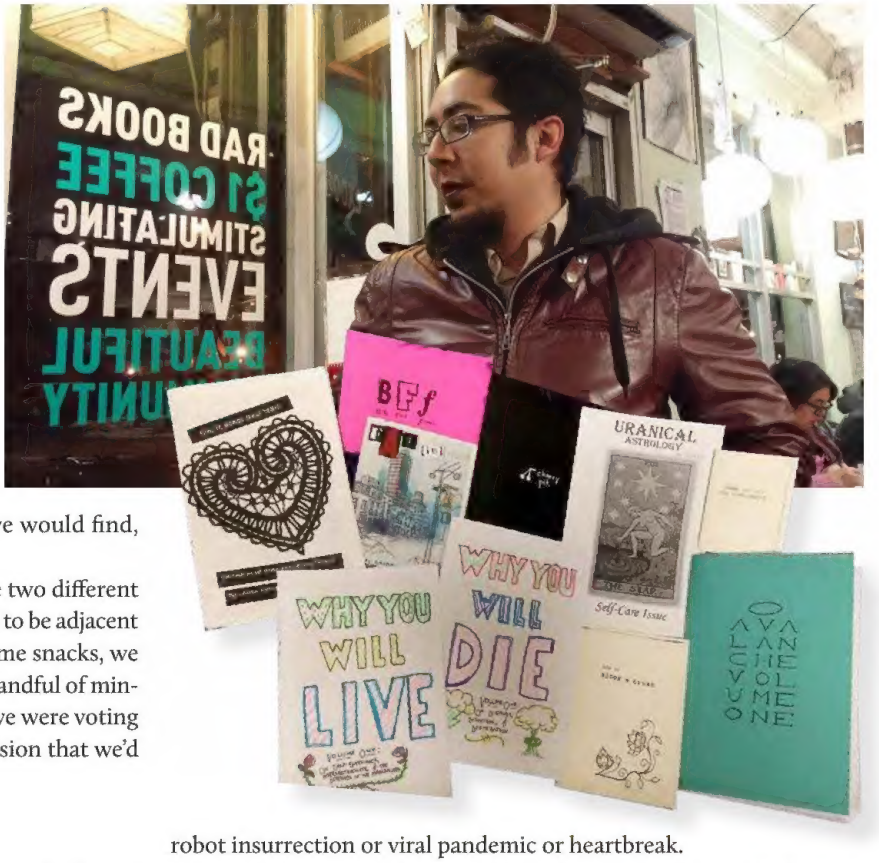
Zines for the end of the world

by Aus

ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO, in a car full of zinesters en route to Ottawa, there was a 10-minute window where we were fairly certain the world was ending.

This was before Trump was elected President of the US, before Hurricane Irma made landfall in the Florida Keys, before an incel left a trail of dead in North York, Toronto. The world seems to have ended a dozen times since that drive. Still, our reasoning was solid, if based on extremely limited data — we needed to refill the tank, and found not one but two gas stations completely sold out without warning.

This might not seem like enough evidence for an apocalypse, but we'd been primed by media images of disaster, real or imagined, where long lines of irate drivers break into fights and bloodshed as the pumps run dry. What queer millennial could miss a new opportunity for soul-sickening anxiety? And so we crept towards the third station, wary of what we would find, mentally preparing ourselves for the worst.



And we were fine — just a fluke, a day where two different business owners misjudged demand and happened to be adjacent to each other. We refilled the tank, we bought some snacks, we laughed about how we'd overreacted. But in that handful of minutes, convinced that society had collapsed while we were voting on our road trip soundtrack, we came to the decision that we'd be just fine.

Why?

Because of our zines.

Between the four of us, our work had covered a broad stretch of topics. We talked about sobriety and addiction, sex work and suicide. My partner and I, through our distro alone, had tips ranging from how to get rid of bloodstains to deciphering Morse code. Our car might not have carried all the seeds of civilization, but we felt like we were pretty damn close to a library replete with the essence of the worlds we moved through.

I feel like this speaks to the reason most people create zines — they help us survive what we're going through, and in writing them we ensure that what we're going through survives beyond us. My writing is a much more literal take on this, exploring the vulnerabilities and badass resilience of those on the margins as well as various crises and survival skills. I've recently distilled this further into a disaster-preparedness curriculum for marginalized folks — Get Out Alive, Together! or GOAT — that attempts to refute the paranoid and bigoted individualism of prepper or survivalist culture with a focus on community continuity.

I write what I write and teach what I teach because, through my OCD and my trauma, I have thought of so many different ways that my worlds can end. Rather than internalize all of that fearful knowledge, I decided that I wanted to use it to help others survive the myriad dangers that might befall us, whether they be robot insurrection or viral pandemic or heartbreak.

We live in an era of perpetual apocalypse — for the marginalized, especially the multiply marginalized, some part of us is in a struggle for survival on any given day. Our worlds can end from a law, a bullet, or a callous word from an ignorant stranger. And contrary to the fervent wishes of cis-het white men with a loose grasp of democracy and a bunker filled with guns, the solution to our late capitalist dystopia isn't simply more capitalism. Our survival is rooted in caring for ourselves, yes, but more importantly, in caring for each other and building networks of mutual support.

We have survived so, so much — individually and collectively. And we will survive so much more.

Aus is a queer, brown, non-binary, intersectional feminist born and raised in the Dish with One Spoon Wampum treaty land known as Toronto. Aus founded and co-runs the Wheelhouse, a distro and nonprofit resource supporting those facing barriers of accessibility, with the goal of building intersectional understanding and mutual support. They try to make art about survival, mental health, and the encroaching doom that awaits us all... but mostly (just barely) make rent. You can find out more at **the-wheelhouse.org** or Instagram at **@wheel.house**

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